CHRIST IN HIS BRETHREN

Raoul Plus S.J.

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Christ in His Brethren. *By the* Rev. Raoul Plus, S.J.

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FIRST PART

THE THREE GREAT LAWS OF OUR COMMON LIFE IN CHRIST

CHRIST IN HIS BRETHREN

BOOK I

THE LAW OF UNITY

Chapter I

THE CHURCH, THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

I. *The mystical Body is the assembly of those who are united with Christ.*
II. *The supernatural unity of all the members of Christ.*

I

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, in founding his Church, has not instituted a kingdom which possesses only a visible government.

This constitutes merely the external part, and the great necessity for it is explained by the fact that man has not only a soul, but a body and senses, and even in the case of the most spiritual faculties he requires to see and hear. Our Lord has not forgotten this; his Church, therefore, will include a *visible* hierarchy, an *external* form of government, and a worship that appeals to the eyes. But this visible portion is not all: the Church is not merely a central office —she is a moral being; she is more than a complicated organization—she is a *living being*.

" What is the Church ?" asked Bossuet, in his beautiful address to recent converts. " It is the assembly of the children of God, the army of the living God, his kingdom, his city, his temple, his throne, his sanctuary, his tabernacle.

But there is an even deeper signification: the Church is Jesus Christ, but it is Jesus Christ shown to the world and in communication with it."

These words remind us of the passage written by St Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where, speaking of the Church, he says: " Which is his body, and the fulness of him which is all in all."[1]

This membership with Christ can be either partial or complete. It is *complete* when the individual soul, attached to our Lord by baptism and the exterior practice of his religion, is in a state of grace—that is to say, he is linked interiorly with Christ, and to all the faithful in grace, by the living bond which is the Holy Spirit. He is *imperfectly* joined to Christ when, although by faith and practice he appears to be in exterior communion with our Lord, yet he is in mortal sin. He is still one of the faithful, since he has not completely fallen away, but his condition is pitiable, for although still a member of Christ, he is not alive but dead.

The thought which should remain in our minds at this point is that of the assembly of the living members of Christ, through whom runs this unending current of supernatural grace, flowing from the Head to the members, from the members to the Head, and from one member to the others.

In this bond of living unity each member has his particular function. " To be a member," wrote Pascal, " means that there can be no existence, no life, nor movement save through the life-giving principle dwelling in the body, for the use of the body. The whole is dependent upon the different parts, and they in their turn depend upon the whole body, and the Holy Spirit is the connecting link by which individuals are given to share in common in the merits of our Lord and in the merits also of the whole assembly."

All the faithful, united one to the other and to our Lord

[1] Eph. i 23.

by the fact of their being in a state of grace, constitute the assembly of saints on earth—that is, the communion of saints. The state of glory merely implies the right of each soul to write the word *saint* with a capital letter.

Père Gratry, with his habitual richness of imagery, said: " There is one heart at the centre, which is Christ's, and by its wonderful luminous and burning power of attraction bestowed upon it by the Father it reunites all mankind; distances are non-existent for souls who are united one to the other in him . . . men from all points of the compass, if they wish, can be one. The stars in the heavens are in touch, and hold together through light and through attraction, and should not the souls of men be in touch when God vivifies them and bestows upon them the glory that radiates abroad ? But the contact of the stars is only an imperfect symbol of the mutual penetration of souls. Herein lies the dogma of the *communion of saints*, the meeting of souls in God, living and dwelling in one, sharing their treasures and their forces with a hospitality one to the other which surpasses anything that has ever been seen; with God and with his Son and with one another they say: ' All my things are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.' "[1]

He who has never striven to catch the throb of the heart-beats of man, has no true comprehension of the meaning of his faith: he is hide-bound in an individualistic religion, and has never grasped the social aspect of the Gospel, which constitutes the true essence of Catholicism.

The Holy Trinity, by bestowing upon us supernatural life, has given us our being, in order that we should without delay plunge into the strong current of divine life which flows from it.

God is greedy for the divine: his desire is to find himself within us; but, alas ! in the aspirations of men there is little room for God. In the beginning God drove man out of

[1] St John xvii 10.—Gratry, *Le philosophie du credo*, dialogue v, pp. 206-208.

Paradise because man had first chased God from his life. To make us like gods, the Son of God became man, for he, the Father's Son, how could he not be the object of his Father's love? He attached us to himself, grafting us on to him, thus making us one entity, and welding us into one mystical body with him. Our Lord is the Son of God, and he desires to make us his brethren, and by becoming his brothers, we shall become the sons of God by him and with him, and thus joined to our Lord in the unity of the one Christ, the Father will be lovingly constrained to look upon us as the object of his divine complaisance.

Thus the divine life which flows from the Father returns to him through the Son, who by the Holy Spirit has brought us all back unto him. And this return is capable of being further enriched by our conversions, our progress, and our fidelity to grace. At the end of time the Body of Christ will have attained to its perfect stature, nothing further will be added; those in whom Christ is not all will be nothing, God will not know them. Of all the sufferings of hell, this ignorance of God is the most terrible, and is the essence of the pain of damnation.

In each one of the faithful God will be all in all for all eternity; Jesus Christ in all, and all in all—this is the meaning of heaven.

"Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me: that they all may be one as we also are. . . . And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me. That they all may be one as thou, Father, in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them: that they may be one, as we also are one. I in them, and thou in me: that they may be perfect in one."[1]

These words, pronounced by our Lord about an hour before his arrest by the disciple who was one of his chosen

[1] St John xvii 11, 20-23.

twelve, are a wonderful legacy expressive of perfect unity—a union that Judas would sever.

There is one family, with God for father and Jesus as brother, and all of us united to our Lord, forming a single assembly, one household, one building; and Christ is the corner-stone which holds all the masonry together. His desire is to form a building which, " being framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together into an habitation of God in the Spirit."[1]

The Church, in her liturgical prayers for the Feast of the Dedication of Churches, uses again the symbol of the building stones of the divine edifice. The material and spiritual temples are associated in a striking confusion of simile, the symbol beside the thing symbolized, and both contributing to enlighten each other. The symbol is the city church or large cathedral, the object symbolized is the heavenly Jerusalem, the great basilica whose foundations cannot be shaken,where the faithful are united in that perfect unity, beside which nothing can exist—the Christ, the Lord of all, who gathers into his embrace the whole world.

" It is my idea," said St Joan of Arc to her judges, " that Christ and his Church are one," and she was not mistaken in her naïve shrewdness. St Augustine considered it to be the best definition of the Church to call it " this personage who fills the whole world, whose head is in heaven and his members on earth."

Thus the *Son* is *one* with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and each of us are *one* with the Son by sanctifying grace, and are *one* with *all* those who with us and like us are united to Christ; this is the wonderful and divine bond of Christian union.

" I and the Father are one." You and I one, you and your fellow-men are one also, and these three are grouped together on earth in one fundamental radical union, which will ultimately be consummated in an eternal union in heaven.

[1] Eph. ii 20, 22.

II

It is easy to realize now the important place which the idea of *unity* should fill in the rightly developed Christian life.

This idea of unity is not a fanciful expression, nor the final goal of our individual relations with God, as was pointed out in the earlier volume, *In Christ Jesus*. We are so surrounded by multiple distractions that it is a fine art, or, rather, a great grace requiring a will-power of a high excellence, to establish the spirit of recollection in our hearts without which there can be no deeply grounded Christian life. Recollection is based on renunciation, which can be defined as " the triumph of the unifying principle in the centre of the soul."

This word *unity* gives the key to our relations with God's children, for the multiple distractions which ruin our efforts to be in union with heaven, run the risk also of overthrowing our attempts to be united with our fellow-men.

Narrow ideas, diverse forms of selfishness, touchiness, jealousies, and a blind attachment to our own point of view, are the source of all misunderstandings, and are not such failings of daily occurrence ?

Is it merely a coincidence that the Evangelist who speaks of this union among men, should be also the Apostle of our union with God ? St John, who reminds us so insistently of the truth: " Be ye one with me, as I am one with the Father," is also more emphatic than any of the others in calling upon us to fulfil the precept of fraternal union; and in point of fact, this second bond of union is strictly enjoined by the first. The *Epistles* of St John are a plain corollary of his *Gospel*, and from them we learn that our duty of union with our neighbours is the logical outcome of our duty to be in union with God in Christ Jesus.

All *one* in Jesus Christ—this is the kingdom of Christ. The very fact that our corporate union with our Lord makes up the whole Body of Christ, impels us to the splendid con-

clusion that we can only have one spirit also, in Christ. We are united by the same inner principle of union: "One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all,"[1] the bond of the same hope, and the same reward at the end of life's journey.

How is it possible to imagine the smallest real opposition between those who are thus united? "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you: but that you be perfect in the same mind and in the same judgement. Now this I say, that every one of you saith: I indeed am of Paul; and I am of Apollo; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?"[2] No, they are to be in one solid bond of union and "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind labouring together for the faith of the gospel";[3] one army joined together in a holy bond of union, which is more than holy; it is divine, for Christ is all in all, Jesus Christ the centre, the point of contact in each and all.

"What?" cried St Augustine, "the smallest untidiness in your appearance puts you in a temper, but you do not notice how by your bickerings and misunderstandings you are destroying the harmony of the Body of Christ."

And he continues: "Listen to Christ, who bids us not to live in strife, for of us as members he has made one body, of which he is the one head, the Lord, the Saviour himself."

This idea of a union that has been bought back, and which binds together all souls who are one with Christ, must from the first have astonished the Jews, wrapped up as they were in their jealously guarded, chilly nationalism.

Only the children of Israel, they thought, could share in the promise—they alone had the right to a place in the kingdom of heaven; they could not imagine that our Lord would desire to gather all nations under his banner, and unite by the Holy Spirit the whole of the human race.

Many lessons were needed to widen their minds and give

[1] Eph. iv 4, 5, 6. [2] 1 Cor. i 10, 12, 13. [3] Philip. i 27.

them a true idea of the communion of saints: the great distinction between Jew and Gentile gradually falls into disuse. From a supernatural point of view, for the natural necessary distinctions between nations is not here being referred to, there are no longer Greeks nor Romans, Scythians or Barbarians. There is but one nation, provided they are believers and are baptized and practise the same faith: God's faithful people, the kingdom of God upon earth.

This link between faithful souls is not limited to this world: the kingdom of God embraces every soul that is one with Christ, whether on earth, in purgatory, or in heaven.

Death in no way creates the barrier which some erroneously imagine: it digs an abyss if the soul is in mortal sin, and the doors of hell are opened; but if the dying person is in a state of grace, it breaks none of the substantial links which unite him with the rest of the faithful.

The one dogma above all others which should be spoken of is the *communion of saints*, which means the union beyond space and time of all the faithful. We are still dwelling in the same house with our dead, if they have died in the peace of our Lord; they have merely passed into another story. They are in heaven, or in purgatory, and communications between them and us are not cut. Between them and us prayer goes to and fro—suppliant on their side if they are in purgatory, full of favours if they are in heaven: on our side they are suffrages or acts of thanksgiving according to the place of their habitation.

The saints in communion may be divided into three categories: there are those who have already reached the land of vision, those who are in the place of waiting or purgation, and those who are in course of formation in the land of merit. And all these are joined together by the same family tie; the life of Christ offers boundless possibilities of mutual intercourse. The Holy Spirit is the great family link between the Father and the Word, and becomes also the family link between all those who are one in Jesus Christ.

Any idea of a dividing line must be thrust aside: the other world presents no barrier of separation; it would be more accurate to say that it draws men together.

This book will not deal with the union between the members of the Church triumphant and the Church militant and suffering—that is beyond its scope; it is limited to the consideration of the Church *militant*.

This vast army of the Church militant, which *by right* includes all humanity, comprises many different categories according to the extent of the union of each individual with the Head of the human race—our Lord. In the first place, Christ is the Head over all who are united to him in charity, whether they are part of the visible Church or not.

Then there are those who are united by faith and the external practice of religion, yet, being no longer in a state of grace, are like members who are paralyzed: one day they may regain life and movement through the merciful assistance of the Head and the living members.

Then there are those who are united with Him only by hope and for whom this hope will be realized one day; and, lastly, there are those who, although one in their final destiny, will never be converted on earth.

St Augustine, writing of his own times, asks: "If only the souls who are in a state of grace are part of the living Body of Christ, what about those who are in mortal sin?"

He draws a distinction between heretics, apostates, and schismatics, formerly members of Christ, who have voluntarily separated themselves from the true faith by an outward act, and those who are also members of Christ who, in the secret recesses of their conscience only, have broken the divine bond of union by consenting to sin. The first belong no longer either to the body or soul of the Church, for they have broken the visible and invisible union with our Lord. The second category includes persons who have not openly denied the Church, and have still the external

link binding them to the *body*, but, being deprived of sanctifying grace, are no longer one with the *soul* of the Church. This distinction between the formal and material heretic has passed into the Christian vocabulary. Our Lord has only one desire: to bring back these poor separated members, and to give them life by his Holy Spirit, and the Church in her turn will never have throughout the centuries to come another ambition than to give a fuller life to the living, to raise the dead to life, and to procure the happiness of union with Christ for all those who are in ignorance and separated from him.

Chapter II

THE CATHOLIC SENSE

I. "*All*" *working for the* "*general*" *good.*
II. *Unity in* "*prayer.*"
III. *Unity in* "*action.*"

I

THE union of all Christians ought not to be merely a kind of static federation; it should be a live group of living beings between whom the Spirit of life is continually creating fresh bonds of union, an unbroken intercourse one with the other, and a perpetual give and take. The union of Christian people is a Christian fellowship. The favours received by one are the property of all. "So you also, forasmuch as you are zealous of spirits, seek to abound unto the edifying of the Church."[1]

God in his providence has distributed his bounty "according to the measure of the giving of Christ," the gift of knowledge, of holiness, and the gift of the apostolic spirit, "for the perfecting of the saints, . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ"; or, in other words, for the general good and the closer union of all with "him who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly

[1] 1 Cor. xiv 12.

joined together by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity."[1] Each will have different gifts: to the one the gift of prophecy, to the other the power of ruling, to a third the apostolic sense; others will know how to teach and exhort, to collect and distribute alms and perform works of mercy. The different members of the Body do not all fulfil the same function, but each has to act for the welfare of the organism as a whole; let us never forget that, " we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

From this it follows that there are continual little attentions from one member to another, a keen, active zeal " communicating to the necessities of the saints "—that is to say, to the needs of the other members of Christ. " Rejoice with them that rejoice: weep with them that weep. Being of one mind one towards another." Then St Paul, knowing human nature, adds with some sarcasm: " If it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men." And again: " If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink."[2] Like us, he is a member of Christ.

Thus in virtue of the dogma of the communion of saints, the same law which governs the life of the Godhead in the consummation of the Three Persons in One, also governs the Christian community and consummates in one invisible unity the members of the Church. The same life animates all the souls who are held together by the same bond of sanctifying grace in the Church.

II

" Nothing should be further from the minds of God's children than the thought of being *isolated;* speaking broadly, it might be said that this idea is not Christian, for a true Christian is never alone."[3]

[1] Eph. iv 7, 12, 15, 16. [2] Rom. xii 5, 13, 15, 16, 18.
[3] Abbé Perreyve, *La journée des malades*, pp. 35-36.

He is never alone when he *prays*. If he understands the meaning of real prayer as Christ means it, he knows that he is part of an assembly of people. If he addresses God in the formula taught by our Lord, he does not say, " my Father," but " *our Father*," and this use of the first person plural will broaden his outlook by reminding him that his brethren are around him, that he is a part of Christendom, a stone in the great Christian temple, and that therefore he has no right to shut himself up in a narrow exclusiveness even in prayer, or, rather, above all in prayer.

Blessed John Eudes made a running commentary on the words, " I love thee with my whole heart," and said: " When we say ' *with my whole heart*,' we should mean with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, with the hearts of all the saints and angels in heaven and earth, who form together one heart with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary by the union which joins them all in one. . . . By the words ' *with my whole soul*,' we must think of the soul of our Lord and of our Lady, and all the souls on earth and in heaven who altogether are one soul through the bond of charity, and we can make use of this soul as a means of loving him who gave it to us." In this manner he prayed as a true Catholic, *with everyone* and *for everyone*, including the whole world. Père Granier, who later on will be recognized as one of the best missionaries in the East, used as a child to say his prayers with his brother, and so devoted were they to one another that it seemed as if they had only one heart between them: they shared a rosary, each taking one end and repeating the Hail Marys together. They were a striking example of the *Cor unum et anima una*, and God, who has promised to be in the midst of those who pray in his name, must assuredly have been with these little ones.

These considerations lead to an immediate conclusion; this spirit of fraternal union, which inspires all the children of God, leads them on to take their part in the official prayers of the whole assembly—that is, in the liturgical offices of

the Church—and to adapt the spontaneous attractions of their private devotions to the cycle of Christian festivals, and so to penetrate to the meaning and symbolical value of these ceremonies and points of ritual that they become, according to the wish of Péguy, "good parishioners."

The Catholic, then, will assist regularly and devoutly at the services at his parish church, and take a practical share in the manifold activities of parochial life. The parish is in concrete a little bit of Christendom, carved out of the edifice of the Church, whereby every baptized soul is enabled to realize by his personal experience the grand life of Catholicism. Let us love our parish church and our priest, but not in a narrow parochial sense. The fact of being good parishioners should never make us forget that the Church is universal, and that consequently to be a good parishioner does not mean an exclusive love for the parish church, but that through it we love and take an interest in the vast Church of God throughout the world, with its multiple works and needs, at home and in missionary lands—the Church with the riches of its twofold priesthood, religious and secular, its hierarchy and its orders, religious congregations and institutions. Because a man belongs to one district or province, he is not thereby prevented from loving his native land: here, above all, the tree must not conceal the forest; nowhere is a narrow spirit more out of place. It is always difficult to draw the line without being exclusive, to fix a boundary without making a limitation, to take sides without being antagonistic. The human heart is so small, but a Christian heart should be large. A good parishioner has no right to this title unless he is above all a good Catholic, which implies that he understands the signification of the term better than anyone else, and has a fuller grasp of the universal idea, for it must never be forgotten that Catholic means universal.

But it may be asked, if we pray together with the members of one group or of the parish, does this prevent the possibility of individual prayer? Not at all.

In order to pray in the *Catholic* manner, that is to say with a full grasp of the meaning of Catholic unity, there is no need to be visibly gathered together. It is quite possible to be praying alone, and yet to unite our prayer to the whole body of Christian people in prayer. We can be praying in company with others, and yet our prayer be selfish and narrow. There is a great difference between the prayer of an individual and an individualistic prayer: the first can be as all-embracing and as apostolic as the world itself; the second is narrow, poverty-stricken, bounded by its own horizon, and has none of the spirit of the universal Church, nor can it be called Catholic in the strict sense of the word.

True Catholic prayer is made in the plural number: *Our Father; We beseech thee, O Lord; Pray for us; Have mercy on us.*

The Christian who studies the signification of this second person plural in the *Our Father* will find he has an ever-increasing aptitude to look above and beyond the private interests of his soul; he will begin to discover the hidden needs of his fellow-Christians around him, and to try and make them better. He will not be content with leading a good life, but will desire that all his brethren, gathered round their heavenly Father, should glorify him by their unanimous filial homage. Further still, not content with the intentions which at that moment are included in the Our Father, which he is reciting, he dreams of a wider horizon, and would gather into the maternal arms of the Church all those who have fallen away, all fugitives, deserters, outcasts, those who know not the truth, pagans, heretics, unbelievers, and enemies.

Very different is the manner in which the would-be pious Catholic understands the *Our* Father: all his piety converges towards himself; he does not take the slightest interest in the other souls around him, but regards God the Father as exercising his divine power solely for his exclusive benefit; he only makes his petty requests for this or that need which perhaps

is but a temporal gain. Can this be called the Catholic spirit? Can the so-called fervent Catholic be said to understand the *Our* Father when it is impossible to discuss with him the ups and downs of Catholicism in the world, for the reason that he takes no interest in the subject? A review or magazine has been started with the object of spreading news of religious events in the Christian universe. There are able periodicals and books treating of these questions: let them alone; there is quite enough to read with the varied topics in the daily paper, and all the world knows that the newspaper, unless it is openly Catholic, too often despises even when it does not misrepresent Catholic news. Yet for the faithful soul who, at a given moment, glances over a map of the world, and especially over a map of Europe, what sad and yet consoling thoughts are aroused! One country is full of magnificent promise, another of appalling disasters, and through all God's kingdom appearing, divine providence attaining its ends. There is this government that persecutes the faithful and where religion is losing ground; another where God's kingdom is advancing. And can such matters be considered as worthy of attention as the cotton market, or the rise in imported meat, or the money market? Certainly, without being accused of having a pharisaical spirit, they are quite as important and even more so: man lives by bread, but a child of God does not live by bread alone, but by all which concerns the glory of God and his kingdom.

Therefore, whenever possible—for the point here under consideration is the formation of the Christian life—should not a Christian be interested not only in the Catholic life of the present day, but in all which has gone before in the history of the Church? Why have so many Catholics so little pride in their Christian heritage? There are two reasons for this: they do not realize their baptismal riches, the life of God in their souls, nor are they aware of their ancestral riches and the beauteous splendours of Mother Church; and for no reason, or because an undefined sense of cowardice

overtakes them, they think themselves to be so small when in reality they are great. Louis Veuillot used to have a book of Church History constantly beside him on his writing-table, and when anyone showed some surprise at his choice, he replied: "It is the Life of my Mother." He understood the meaning of the *Our Father*.

III

It is a good thing to become acquainted with the many activities of the mystical Body of Christ, but it is better still to share in them.

Anyone who has ever reflected upon the waste of Catholic energies will yearn for a little more co-operation and mutual understanding, and will feel regretful that a certain type of individualism should sometimes form a hindrance to work in common for the Church.

It would be so easy to meet together and discuss initiatives and pool efforts; but a "one-man" enterprise is more popular. If the work is to be carried on by several people together, no matter what it may be, the workers prefer to pay no attention to it: each person jealously guards his own particular corner of the field of action, and either ignores or looks askance at his neighbour's activities. There is a letter written in the seventeenth century by Marie Rousseau to Monsieur Olier, the founder of the College of St Sulpice (God often made use of her to convey his directions as to the daily life and work of the college), in which he alludes to the squabbles which from time to time had taken place between this and that over-zealous worker. "Ah, God!" she exclaims, "how the Son of God is dishonoured in parishes and religious bodies; they are always saying things against each other, and seem to be perpetually thinking about their rights and not of serving their neighbour"; and she expresses her longing desire for the moment when it will be possible to see them "united together in a very different fashion than at

this moment, without any suspicion of disdain and envy one of the other."[1]

Thanks be to God that some progress has been made since the seventeenth century: people are beginning to realize that this petty spirit is unfavourable to the ministry of souls.

Frequently in their inner workings a group of workers will be divided up into water-tight compartments; each individual is absorbed in his own particular business, and the outer world is shut away. It would appear to be easy for a preacher to give a thought to his brother editors and writers, and help in making their labours known. But no! his work is to preach and theirs to write, and the union between these two convergent activities cannot be brought about. Our lives are narrow; we care nothing for others or for the influence of others on us, and of us on them.

What an irresistible force a group of workers would have, with broad sympathies and bold initiative, interested in all forms of good works, disdaining none, but knowing how to make use of them when circumstances permit; ready to efface themselves if another is likely to do better and more fruitful work; willing to concert together and to concentrate their energies so as to diminish "the general expenses"—to use a trade expression—and increase a hundredfold the profits.

It is only too clear that the persecutions of these later years in France are in part the cause of these lamentable divisions and waste of energies in the domain of good works. The other cause is to be found within the soul; and this, at any rate, is under our control. Man not only shows that he is ignorant of what is occurring on the same plane as himself when he says that such and such a thing is non-existent, and it lies at his own door, but also ignores as being of no practical importance both that which is *above* and *beneath* him.

[1] Monier, *Vie de M. Olier*, i, p. 474 (Gigord).

Each individual improvises and makes fresh discoveries, and the discoveries made by others are useless. The young people of the present day begin again with fresh outlay all the experiments which the former generation have made; what a waste of time this is ! The good efforts of one person when they are of use, serve for himself alone, when they ought also in part to help others. Sometimes the elders, forgetting that they have not always been old, do not understand the young, and refuse to move and set up a frigid wall of opposition to every new suggestion. And yet what good can be done by a friendly understanding, a mark of approval, a piece of advice, an effort to help forward some enterprise and instil confidence ! It is so easy to smile scornfully and appear to ignore what is going on, or even to cut off supplies, to take everything for oneself and give no credit to another less experienced, who, if always left out of count, will never venture to come forward. It is good to know how to give encouragement when possible, and also when necessary to correct without causing discouragement, and to be ready to give advice that will be helpful while in no way crushing out the worker's own initiative.

There are many latent forces that only need to be brought out; an illuminating suggestion made at the right moment will suffice for an enthusiastic mind who is able to detect the good seed which the sun has brought to fruition.

It is quite possible to show a spirit of opposition to the idea of unity, and that in many ways, such are the curious aberrations of some people. Such persons are severe in their criticism of their brother's enterprise, which they hinder in every possible way. Because some particular form of apostolic zeal is new to them, they vie with one another in ridiculing it; this type of mentality is worthless for the sole reason that it differs from their own. The Church desires that such and such pious opinions should be left free for men to adopt or leave on one side as they wish, but these people

are more rigid than Rome, and anyone who disagrees with them is heretical and suspect.

This censure is cloaked under the guise of doctrinal orthodoxy: under the pretext of a zeal for historical truth, they search the history of some religious institution until they have unearthed some long-forgotten quarrel, and those who were concerned in it are brought forward and venomously attacked, as if there were not sufficient enemies outside the sheepfold ! but it is in the flock, and in one portion of it, that the attacks are made.

Who gave you the power to sweep away this grand expression of Catholic dogma which centuries of undisputed authority has maintained; to crush with one word this social venture which displeases you; to put spiteful questions and point out differences of opinion, and bring to light ancient problems which were slumbering in well-deserved obscurity to the satisfaction of everyone ?

By whose mandate do you fulminate these judgements ? In matters which are free, cannot we, God's children, be allowed to enjoy the holy liberty of his little ones, and trust to our lofty responsibilities to keep us from pitfalls ? It may be necessary to intervene, perhaps; but, if so, why do it in this narrow sectarian spirit ? Was it in this manner that our Lord desired his words, " they are one," to be verified ? How sad it is to find some big project held up at a given moment when about to be launched, by some deliberately planned obstacle which will take weeks to repair, and for the worker to be forced to avow that: " My life has been spent in being attacked by my best friends ";[1] or for an enemy of the Church to state that: " To serve Catholics is an ungrateful task; it requires a supernatural forgetfulness of self to work for them."[2] On every occasion we should look for points of contact, never for obstacles. In the case of a fresh project, our endeavour should be to see the good in it, and not make up our mind once and for all, and assume a hostile attitude.

[1] A. de Mun, *Discours*, iv, p. 234. [2] Lecanuet, ii.

Absurd enthusiasms are, of course, out of place, but so, though for a different reason, are cast-iron preliminary antipathies.

If a notion is not practicable, in time it will be forgotten, and our enthusiasms will have made no difference to it. But if the idea was capable of being realized in the future, and we killed it in the germ, then there is blood on our hands: that is a responsibility no one should incur, for " thou shalt not kill."

There is lacking to certain Catholics that gift of keen, ready sympathy which assuredly does not do away with the spirit of prudent criticism; a criticism founded on orthodox teaching which renders this sympathy comprehending, encouraging, friendly, and serene because full of intelligent goodwill. Why is it that the question can be asked:

> Is it a fatal law,
> That the wicked are united only in brutal hatred,
> And the good know not how to be one ?

Have the children of darkness more self-forgetfulness than the children of light? Is hatred a stronger bond than love; or must the words: " See how they love one another," be changed into: " See how they tear one another to pieces "? The Cardinal de Retz remarked, and with reason: " The difficulty is not how to fight against our enemies, but how to live with our friends." Anyone who reads the seventeenth chapter of St John's Gospel is struck by the continual injunction made by our Lord that men should faithfully keep the bond of unity.

In the twenty-first verse it says: " That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us." Again, in verse twenty-two: " That they may be one, as we also are one."

Our Lord is about to die, he will hardly speak again, so these are almost his last words; and it is at this moment, when he is saying good-bye, that this one phrase stands out, often repeated, which shows his innermost thoughts.

The mind of Christ is revealed by these last words of advice.

But is the command to love one another so difficult for man that our Lord should have to insist upon this point?

Yes! the child in his cradle holds out his arms because he wants to make friends with everyone and wants them to kiss him. But this charming spontaneity will not last: when he is older and has his first games with a schoolfellow, he will quickly notice that between a quarrel and a friendship there is only a moment's difference. From thence it is but a step to give him a blow or trip him up; nor is this even necessary to show jealousy: are not certain greetings like the kiss of Judas? And there are many other experiences which will serve to complete this lesson. On all sides there are walls, barricades, cloisters, armed with locks and keys, one half of the world in antagonism to the other. But the real barriers and double locks are within the soul, and here lies the evil. Every human being has a heart, but the greater number do not love one another.

"Why is it," asked a child of his mother, "that our Lord said, 'Love one another,' and we spend our time in quarrelling?" The reason is that man, who was created for unity, is the enemy of unity.

At certain times in his life he is less refractory; under the weight of some great suffering or when confronted by a serious difficulty, he will look for the help of his fellow-men. And the rare occurrence of these occasions gives to this friendly feeling a sort of almost religious character. At other times the drawing together is quite secular. Man is too petty-minded to be able to love for long together, and nothing is so narrow as a man's heart when he prides himself on his upright character. Thus is explained our Lord's insistence that all men should "remain united." "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."[1]

The early Christian communities remembered so clearly

[1] St John xiii 35.

these repeated injunctions, that, except for an occasional lapse here and there, they obeyed them faithfully; and this spirit of peace and mutual understanding was the wonder of the pagan world. What a contrast this is to the sentiment which prompted the saying: " Man is a devourer of his fellow-men."

A search throughout the ages for the instances on earth when the closest bond of unity was to be found among human beings, will show this to be where the true Christian spirit flourished, whether this was in the Jesuit settlement in Paraguay or the earliest cloister. Father Charles de Foucauld, in his hut away in the vast solitude of the African desert, had but one dream; he wanted to form a centre and draw to himself all those who are scattered over the world, so as to give them to his Master, Jesus Christ. " I should like to accustom them all," he writes in his zeal, "Christians, Musulmans, Jews, and idolaters, to regard me as their brother, their universal brother." These words express the true spirit of Christ. " And," he adds, " they are beginning to call this house ' La Fraternité,' and that pleases me."

If a proof on the other side is needed, it will be sufficient to remark on the unstable elements which are to be found in all secular unions, federations, associations, coalitions, whose sole bond of union is their mutual interests.

There is a story in history that the great Emperor Charles V, when he abdicated his crown and retired into a monastery, set to work to regulate the various clocks, but finding it almost impossible to make any two of them agree, he declared that he was astounded that he had ever attempted the greater task of trying to induce men to unite. Even where God is, it is difficult to make human beings agree; where God is not, it is impossible.

Without searching for an example in the history of the relations between the people of one nation or of the same roup, have not the most unruly been seen to join together after a more or less prolonged period of mutual understand-

ing, and to become more or less peaceable; and then one day at their congress meeting they fraternize to the report of revolver shots; each flies at the other's throat amid a torrent of curses, and they mutually excommunicate one another?

In very truth, God holds the bond of unity; he is the proprietor of it, and he who seeks it away from him only succeeds in forming a sacrilegious parody.

Chapter III

THE HOLY EUCHARIST, THE SACRAMENT OF UNITY

I. *The Holy Eucharist symbolizes unity.*
II. *It requires unity.*
III. *It realizes union.*

"THAT they may be one, as my Father and I are one"—that is the law of unity.

"This is my Body, take ye and eat. Do this in commemoration of me." Here is the sacrament of common union—the sacrament of unity.

Man is too frail to remain always one with his brethren and with God; God has to intervene, or, rather, God should have a share in our daily lives. Man, who requires a special commandment ordering him to love, has need also of a special sacrament to enable him to obey this injunction, which it might have been thought would be so easy. This sacrament is the Holy Eucharist. Christ the God-Man gives his flesh and blood as the living food of all men, so as to unite them one to the other, and establish peace and harmony in this tragic city of division which is our earthly dwelling-place.

Already, by faith and baptism, we form a great spiritual union—"One faith, one baptism."

And now a corporal link, the Body of Christ, will reinforce the vital bond between us.

" For we being many, are one bread, one body: all that partake of one bread."[1] It will now be seen in what way the Holy Eucharist

Symbolizes our common union.
Requires it of us.
Brings it to pass.

I

The earliest gatherings of the faithful were called communities, assemblies—words which are very expressive; and the principal act at these meetings was called the collect or *synaxis*. The collect—and the word remains with a very special meaning attached to it—signified at the beginning, the union of all those collected together, who assisted in the participation of the sacrifice. The word *synaxis* has been translated by the word *communion*, which implied for the early Christians, less, perhaps, the idea of the union of *each* individual with Jesus Christ, than the union and *gathering together* of all the co-participants. The social communal aspect of the word preceded the individualistic notion, while the nature of the rite is an even fuller and more admirable exemplar of the union one with another, of all Christians who share in the breaking of bread.

What is the Holy Eucharist but the banquet of all souls together and in all ages? The fact of sitting at the same table and eating the same food is acknowledged as a sign of the inward spirit of union. Some people think the expression " holy table " is old-fashioned, but the real significance of the term is easily understood once its meaning is made clear.

The nature of the food served on the altar-table shows in a wonderful way the union that should exist between those who take part in these mysteries. Does not the Church's most ancient eucharistic prayer ask that God will grant that as the grains of corn scattered over the hillside are collected

[1] 1 Cor. x 17.

to form one bread, so the faithful dispersed over the world shall be gathered together in one by virtue of this heavenly food?

Not only the nature of the oblation is a type of union, but the Church herself is a striking symbol of it. In the early days, Christians had to live in the Catacombs, to celebrate Mass in their own houses, or adopt the ancient pagan temples for Christian gatherings, and in particular for the Mass, which was their most solemn act. In this way the Christian community was able to provide suitable habitations for the eucharistic altar. In a church, does not everything converge at the altar? While in the Low-Church Protestant temple the reading-desk with the Bible is the central point, the table of the Last Supper takes only a secondary position. In the Catholic church the pulpit certainly is well placed, but the Sanctuary is in the centre.

The style in which our churches, and cathedrals in particular, have been built, in almost every country, emphasizes this mark of unity, the union of all working together, and their unanimity in a common worship.

When Chartres was built in 1144, the people harnessed themselves to the carts that carried the building material. The construction of St Denis saw "a wave of enthusiasm throughout France; on all sides men and women were to be seen dragging heavy loads, sometimes over the marshes."

Laon, Beauvais, Rheims, Amiens, and Bourges were all built in the same way: stones were brought by different individuals; a guild would present a stained-glass window; here a countess might be seen assisting in making the mortar by bringing pails of water for the mason. The supreme feat achieved by Christian art is that by the grandeur of these buildings it has made visible the unanimous impulse of man towards God.

"Our cathedrals owe their existence to the mutual help of all classes of society: the poor gave his handiwork, the rich his money, the man of learning his scientific knowledge, the artist his art. There is nothing to compare with this in

the whole history of art; Christian unity alone could inspire this union of forces.

But if the building can in this way be an expression of Christian unity, how much more striking is the example of the wonderful ritual of the holy Mysteries to which the cathedrals and churches serve as framework. Enter a church where Mass is being offered: it is Christ who offers and is offered; *all* which is Christ's, *himself*, the *priest* and the *laity*, are one in the union of this one sacerdotal function, a priesthood which in the priest is sacramental and in the people is spiritual, but the two together make but one priesthood.

There is one point in the Mass where the cordial union of all those assembled there is publicly displayed—that is, in High Mass at the moment preceding the Communion. A sign is given to denote the union of all men; this sign is the kiss of peace. The celebrant has already kissed the Host, then one by one, from the deacon to the subdeacon, the altar-servers and the choir, and in some places it passes down the nave to the last of the congregation hidden in a distant corner; a wave of brotherly love flows from the altar to the furthermost pillar. Each of the faithful places his arms on the shoulders of his neighbour, attaching himself to him as the mountaineer is linked to his fellow for a stiff climb; in this case the object is to rise up to God, with his Son, who a moment earlier was raised aloft by the hands of the priest at the solemn moment of elevation. The paths are narrow, but the hesitating footsteps are strengthened by the more assured; he who wavers is supported by the whole of the assembly, each sharing the benefit of the solidarity of the common brotherhood.

In former days certain rites were a more manifest expression of the social community of those assembled at the Holy Eucharist.

Nowadays, especially at the High Mass or late Sunday Mass, the number of communicants is reduced to the minimum, or is non-existent.

Formerly everyone who assisted at the Sacrifice shared in the Communion. Catechumens and the unworthy had been excluded; only the faithful remained in the *basilica*. Each had brought his portion of bread and wine destined for the holy Mysteries. At the moment of Communion these offerings were restored to them, but as consecrated bread and wine. Each of the faithful had brought his offering; this offering, now the Body and Blood of our Lord, was returned to them. The individual offerings were many; on the altar they became one in one Lord Jesus Christ; and this one Lord all received: the adults came to the ambo, and took into their hands and consumed the consecrated fragments, then drank of the sacred Blood from the chalice presented by the deacons. The tiny children in their mother's arms who could not take the bread, sipped a few drops of the precious Blood. In the case of those who were ill or imprisoned and could not come to the common altar, messengers were detailed, who brought them a portion which united them with the rest of the faithful. In the case of the consecration of the precious Blood, one chalice was not sufficient; several were prepared, and before giving Holy Communion the archdeacon poured into each of these some drops of the consecrated wine from the chalice of the celebrant: in this way the idea of unity was once more made clear.

Two other characteristics of the early ages of Christendom underline the symbolical value of the breaking of bread in common—the *concelebratio* and the *fermentum*.

The concelebration was a use at Rome, the seat of the Pontiff, the head of the Church, and the churches where it took place rapidly increased. At the close of the first centuries, twenty-five were counted, having each a priest at the head who was charged to administer Holy Communion to all the people gathered in his church; often the Pope moved from one titular church to another so as to celebrate the holy Mysteries himself. He summoned the titulars of the twenty-four other churches, and all joined together to celebrate

Mass, much in the same way as in the Ordination Mass at the present day, when the priests to be ordained articulate the words of the Canon at the same time as the bishop. The people on their side took their part, as has been seen already.

Thus every time was affirmed anew the great truth of the union of all, priests and people, in this act of worship, in the oblation of the same sacrifice, the eating of the same divine food. The celebrant, instead of consuming the Host entire, kept a portion and distributed it to those who, on the morrow, here or elsewhere, would say Mass in their turn, thus emphasizing the union in one common act of worship, not only of all those present, but also of those elsewhere and in the ages to come, who would take part in the holy Mysteries. Up to the fourth century at least the Pope and the bishops of distant cathedral churches sent one another the eucharistic Host as a sign of fraternal union.

At the moment in the Mass when the Host is broken, the celebrant placed one of the fragments in the chalice, and with it either one of the portions from his Mass of the preceding day, or one which had been sent him by the Pope or one of the bishops, and in this manner he proclaimed his union with the Sovereign Pontiff and all the sister Churches. These rites have disappeared, but actually each priest knows that he celebrates in union with the Pope of Rome and with the whole Church.

A happy inspiration has caused a map of the world to be published, marked with the figures of the clock round its circumference; thus, by means of two arrows set at different points it is possible to follow the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, *one* and *multiple*, at the different moments of the day. When it is 7 or 8 o'clock at Rome—the hour when the Pope says his Mass—it is a quarter to 7 at Paris, and 4 in Brazil. At 1 in the morning at Paris, Mass is celebrated at Malacca or Tonkin; at 2 at Paris, it is offered at Madras and Pondicherry, etc. Masses go on continually; there are at least

four in an hour, and at each Mass the priest names the Pope and unites himself to the head of Christendom, and in union with him prays for all the Christian community scattered over the world.

II

The Eucharist does far more than merely symbolize unity: it *requires* union among its members.

The builders of our cathedrals have been spoken of already; every offer was accepted, but the crowds of volunteers had to be disciplined. To improve the output of labour, the members of similar professions were joined together, also the inhabitants of one parish and one district: each group had its trumpets and its flag. At a given signal they set off in silence or in prayer for the workshops.

One touching trait was that everyone must first pardon his enemy before his admittance into the group. If anyone refused, his offering was removed as being something unclean, and he himself driven out of the association as an unworthy member. This is a striking and practical recognition of the Gospel injunction: " If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother: and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift."[1] There was that prelate who had had a quarrel with one of his brother priests; when he reached the *Pater* in the Mass and was about to pronounce the words: " Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," he suddenly stopped short and declared that he could not continue the prayer until he had been publicly reconciled.

St Paul also openly proclaimed and reiterated the duty of brotherly union: " For first of all I hear that when you come together in the church, there are schisms,"[2] but he added that there were to be no discords when they came to Holy

[1] St Matt. v 23, 24. [2] 1 Cor. xi 18.

Communion, for this was a vice common among the Corinthians, even at the Holy Eucharist. Some arrived late, and the first comers would not wait for them, neither would they go shares, and the poor were insulted or left at the door; this, says St Paul, is incompatible with the Lord's Supper. There must be a sharing in common, common both in time and in locality, which means that they were to be all together in the same place and at the same table, and bound by a common bond of charity.

Let us try and picture one of these agapes of ancient times. The members of the community were gathered round their bishop or his delegate, like the disciples with their Master at the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, and as far as possible at the same hour. This gathering, based on the Paschal Feast, resembled it inasmuch as it was held in the house of some prosperous member of the congregation, with divans and napkins prepared in the Eastern way. Sometimes they would go on to the terrace of the house, or under a big tree. Jews brought in Gentiles—a supreme triumph of Christian unity over the fiercely national individualism of the people of Israel.

But there was something better still, for here were masters and slaves, and no distinction between rich and poor, all fraternizing side by side. The service began with prayer; then came the reading from a letter of the Apostles or from some distant community, and the priest would explain some point of doctrine, or comment on some words of the divine Master or St Paul, or censure some individual or the whole community. Meanwhile the provisions which each had brought were put together, and each in a joyful and pious spirit partook in the charity of all. Towards the close of the repast, as at the Last Supper, the priest took bread and broke it, and poured into the chalice the wine which later would be consecrated; then in a loud voice, with outstretched hands, he consecrated the bread and wine, and each person received his portion and communicated.

Such was, at any rate, the ideal to be aimed at, as may be seen from the first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians: the priests, the heads of the congregation, were careful to supervise every detail of the arrangements, thus ensuring the general well-being. The Apostolic Constitutions, which lay down the ceremonial regulations—a rough outline of the actual ceremonies of the Mass—enjoin that the Communion should be received with recollection, and no noise; a hymn sung all together brought the service to a close.

But although the hymn was finished, the thanksgiving after Holy Communion was not terminated. Furnished with strength from on high, consoled by the sacred Banquet, and divinely inebriated, as St Paul says, each communicant will shed abroad the radiant light of his Christian life: "singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord," are his words to the Ephesians; "giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father."[1]

III

The Holy Eucharist not only symbolizes unity, but it *produces* unity.

The Holy Eucharist incorporates us with Christ as he is: now, Christ as he is, is the Head, including also the members. Therefore, by receiving Holy Communion we unite ourselves with all which is Christ's, to the Head first but also to the members, by the fact of this union. Already in Baptism all those who are in Christ Jesus are federated in *one*. The life flowing from the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, in which we are all partakers, creates between us one common life-giving bond. And the sacred Flesh of the Son of Man comes to add a new vivifying principle to this link. This new gift is of so mighty a consequence, and this mode of corporation is so unheard of and so marvellous, that it may be called a new form of incorporation.

[1] Eph. v 19, 20.

Grace is the *spiritual* possession of God.

In the Holy Eucharist we possess him in a *corporal* manner; the Eucharist presupposes grace, therefore it requires that God should be present in the soul. But to God dwelling in the soul by grace, it brings our Lord in his Sacrament, and it is Jesus present in his Sacrament who forms the bond of union between the communicants, not a fresh link, but one that is more closely and firmly welded together.

When a Host is broken, each particle contains our Lord, yet all the particles form but one Host.

Holy Communion is given to a large congregation, but all the Hosts are but one Lord, and each of the faithful shares in this union, and not only that belonging to this Mass, but also in the union of all other Communions in other places and at other times. The same indivisible life of Christ it is which comes to each individual in the Host, and is the bond of communion between the assembled faithful. "For we, being many, are one bread, one body: all that partake of one bread."[1] These words are used in no metaphorical sense, nor are they a vague sentimental expression, but a living organic reality.

What a difference there is between this breadth of doctrine and the narrow Protestant teaching.

The Confession of Augsburg (Article XXI) lays down that "the Mass is not a sacrifice for the living and the dead offered for the expiation of their sins, but rather a communion wherein the priests and people receive the Sacrament *each for himself*."

What a different impression this leaves, what a strange manner of coming together: *communion each for himself*—how the centrifugal idea of Holy Communion is constricted by forbidding it to pass beyond the individual and reach out to the confines of the world.

For the Church, true depository of the mind of Christ, the Eucharist has a very different signification. It includes all the human race, partakers in the redemption, the living

[1] 1 Cor. x 17.

and the dead grouped round the altar, the whole Church incorporated with Christ and united in offering the Sacrifice of Christ, and each shares in the Eucharist, uniting himself through Christ, who is the Head, to all his members. Logically, devotion to the Holy Eucharist, if properly understood, should lead to a devotion to our neighbour.

Our neighbour belongs to Christ, and by receiving our Lord I am closely linked with my neighbour: there is less interval than is imagined between the communion with the *Head*, and the communion with the *members*, between the physical and mystical Body of Christ; for confirmation of this, read and meditate upon the lessons in the Breviary for the Octave of Corpus Christi. This thought was much beloved by St Thomas Aquinas, who declares that "the Holy Eucharist is not only union with God, but the union of the communicants among themselves."

And with him piety and doctrine are never separated; in the prayers composed by him for priests before Mass are found these words: "Vouchsafe, O God most merciful, that I in such wise partake of the Body of thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord . . . that I may be found worthy to be incorporated into his mystical body, and for evermore to be numbered among his members"; and the repetition in the Latin of the words *corpus*, *corpori*, *incorporari*, is evidently intentional, and signifies the physical and mystical, the double union and incorporation, or, rather, one incorporation of the two parts.

Father Monsabre, in his explanation of St Thomas, writes: "The closer the union between Jesus and ourselves, the deeper we shall penetrate into one another by charity. It is idle to attempt to unite men by philanthropic works; this can only be done by the gift of self, and the gift of self comes from the gift of God."

The Christian feasts which were held in the early days of the Church have been described. The congregation, after one of these gatherings where all partook of one Bread

and drank from one Cup, were so imbued with the spirit of harmony, that it seemed as if from henceforward they would live in peace and concord: *cor unum, anima una.* The pagans exclaimed in astonishment: " See how they love one another." No longer did men note the points of difference between themselves and their fellows, between master and slave, manual worker and clerk, but rather the points in common, and always on the higher plane because of their union in Christ—one faith, one baptism, and one heavenly Food.

In the days of St Paul it was the participation in this one Bread which inspired Philemon with respect for his slave Onesimus. Centuries later, Marshal Turenne and his orderly were waiting to go up to Holy Communion, and as it happened the Marshal was standing behind his servant, and the man whispered to him: " Pass in front, sire." The answer came back: " Remain in your place, we are all equals here." Can it be said that the master always shows a like consideration for his servant, or that the servant is always as respectful to his employer when approaching the communion rail ?

Wherever souls understand this law of charity and make it a living reality in their lives, what happiness it brings ! One day a visitor was going over one of the homes of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and as he left the infirmary he turned to the Superior who was accompanying him, and said: " Whence do your daughters get the strength to put up with such a life ?" She smiled, and without speaking she led the way to the Chapel, and opening the door, she pointed to the Tabernacle, saying: " From him, he is there."

Was it pure utopianism on the part of Louis XIII, in a letter which began with the words, " Mirae caritatis," to advise the practice of Holy Communion, properly understood, as the great means of uniting individuals ?

The Holy Eucharist, which is so powerful a bond of *union between* different *classes*, should it not also bring about *union between nations ?*

When visiting foreign countries we are often edified by the crowded Masses. There are perhaps more Communions in the diocese of Cologne than anywhere else: among Catholics in England is there a laudable zeal for the frequent reception of the Body of Christ?

On all sides there are many Communions and so little union; many ordinary unions and so little real communion. What an extraordinary person man is! how difficult it is for him to love, and to love his neighbour and live in peace with other men. What a strange force there is in a flowing river, or a range of mountains, or a frontier sign, that is able to keep men apart! And yet at every Mass the faithful say one to the other, *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum;* doubtless the first significance of the words is the peace of a good conscience, but is the peace among men thereby excluded? Every time that the *O Salutaris* is said, how sad it is to hear the words, that peace is not yet signed, war is always with us, war within the soul and without.

A desire for peace and goodwill, however, must not run counter to the demands of strict justice, which are so vitally important for a nation; but because governments are in difficulties, is it a reason for the people to hate one another?

By no means: hatred is always hatred, and under no circumstances can it be sacred. It lowers man and is an offence against God, who is dwelling or who desires to dwell with man. To fight with lawful weapons and shed blood if required and force the enemy to yield, is quite another matter from hating him. Hatred is a noxious weed, cursed by God, which Jesus Christ has anathematized. It is possible to go further still, for in spite of the most bitter divergences, if individuals are of the same faith with the same divine life within them, the inner bond of union between them remains intact. Between two enemies, who each on his side goes to Holy Communion, there exists an unbreakable link which no engine of war can rend asunder, and in spite of the terrible

conflict which has ploughed up a bullet-ridden no-man's-land between them. Yet, how great is our natural weakness ! how is it possible to be at the same moment both closely united and so widely divided ? Holy Communion is the heaven which makes virgins germinate; why does it not also germinate men who respect justice, who are charitable and peace-lovers ?

Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.

As a last reflexion can it be said truthfully that many of the faithful have a true comprehension of the real meaning of the Holy Eucharist ? They think that to go to Holy Communion is to receive our Lord, which is true; but it is also to *give* as has been said elsewhere.

The communicant receives our Lord united with his members; he does not therefore only become one with the Head, but also with the whole Church, a point which should be insisted upon.

In a bold phrase St Fulgentius said to the Christians: " You who are the *mystical* body of Christ, when you receive his *physical* body, you receive that which is yours already." He made this remark because it seemed to him so difficult to separate that which the Master had joined together, the branches from the trunk, the vine from its branches. In those days the doctrinal meaning of the communion of saints, and of the union of all the faithful in Christ, was better understood than it is now.

In point of fact, the Holy Eucharist has been made a personal matter, for self alone, and is desired with a kind of narrow-minded spiritual greed. Holy Communion in its true meaning includes not only the desire to possess the divine Guest for oneself, but also the desire to give self as completely as is possible to all those sharing in this common banquet; and here lies the great difference.

Up to the twelfth century it was this idea of the social communal aspect of Holy Communion which dominated men's minds.

In the early days of the Church, more especially, to take part in the holy Mysteries was considered less as the means of uniting the faithful soul to Christ, than as joining all the community in one in Christ. The first thought in the minds of the faithful was less the federation with the Head, than the confederation through him of *all the members among themselves*. The meaning of Holy *Communion* is not merely the opportunity for each member to become one with Christ, but rather a mingling together of all the members of Christ's Body. Then came the heresies against the Real Presence, and men began to think less of the dynamic unifying power of the sacred Host than of its static force, as being the continual presence of our Lord.

For the notion of sharing one with the other in the holy Sacrifice was substituted little by little, without being properly understood, the idea of individual adoration of the Real Presence, and the point deserves mention.

The earlier idea was not forgotten by some at any rate who put it in the first place, but with others it was almost involuntarily placed in the second rank.

In our time, under the double impulsion of the movement in favour of frequent Communion, and the desire for a clearer understanding of the liturgy of the eucharistic *Sacrifice*, there is a tendency for it to recover its rightful position —that is, to stand beside if not in front of the Eucharist considered exclusively as the abiding presence of our Lord. In the Holy Eucharist, considered under the aspect of Holy *Communion*, people are beginning to realize that the participation of each individual in the one Host is the sharing of all through the Host; or, in other words, they perceive that the two expressions—*communion* and *communion of saints*—although implying very different realities, yet gain in meaning when placed side by side, and that he receives our Lord in a more fully Christian and Catholic manner if he desires to come into touch, through our Lord, with all those who are united to him, and share with them the

living union of this supernatural organism—*one bread, one body*.

It seems as if a real comprehensive devotion to the Holy Eucharist is at last getting the upper hand, together with a more wideawake understanding of the splendid bond of union between Christian people.

BOOK II
THE LAW OF CHARITY

Chapter IV
WHY SHOULD WE LOVE?

I. *Christ is my neighbour.*
II. *A really "new commandment."*

I

A SCRIBE came and asked our Lord which was the first commandment of all.

"And Jesus answered him: . . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God. . . . And the second is like to it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour." And our Lord, in order to see whether the lesson has been taken in by his interlocutor, asks him to repeat the words, and he says: "to love one's neighbour as one's self is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices." Our Lord was satisfied and replied: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."[1]

To love our neighbour is more meritorious than to offer sacrifice. "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother." And when you have made this first sacrifice in honour of your neighbour, "then, coming, thou shalt offer thy gift."[2]

These two commandments do not appear to be in the same category; a cursory glance would seem to show that our Lord places the duty of brotherly love before the obligation of divine worship.

In reality the two commandments are one; in each case

[1] St Mark xii 28, 30, 31, 33, 34. [2] St Matt. v 23, 24.

it is God whom we are venerating and to whom we strive to attain, God in himself and in our neighbour: but in both cases it is God, and that is why for us charity is a theological virtue, because God is its object.

What an honour for us! We often complain that God is far away, but he is close by, for he is in each of our brethren. Our Lord, speaking of the corporal works of mercy, says: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of my least brethren you did it to me."[1] "They and I are one."

Our Lord thirsts to be continually a wanderer on earth; his title, Emmanuel, God with us, seems to be the name he values most, and is most anxious to exemplify. Therefore he is not content to come only once into our midst in the crib at Bethlehem, to be with us by grace, but in a different if not more intimate yet more delicately appreciable manner in the Holy Eucharist. He desires to hide, to be one with us, behind each Christian who will be thus the shelter of the most High, lending his nothingness to him who is all, so that he, the infinite God, may dwell in perpetual contact with us. It is as if our Lord were to say: "They are I, I who am speaking to you, the Son of God."

Shall we, like the Jews, say of these words concerning the Holy Eucharist: "this is too hard for us"? No, to us they are full of sweetness; "at each step, Lord, I meet thee: owing to the wonder of our divine incorporation with thy sacred Personality, I cannot make a movement that is not perceived by thee. If I turn my eyes within, thou art there; if I look towards my neighbour, thou art there also; I am surrounded by living tabernacles if I only have eyes to recognize them."

God lives, or wishes to live, in each one of us: we are joined in fact, or at least potentially, to Jesus Christ and through him share in the divine life. And because we are living, or ought to be living, the same divine life in Christ, there should be a strong bond of charity uniting us together.

[1] St Matt. xxv 45.

Once we have grasped this truth we are not surprised that our Lord should have chosen brotherly love as the special mark of a true Christian which should differentiate his followers from the worldling: " By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."[1]

Many animals, and all the heathen, can love out of sympathy, but Christian charity is founded on our supernaturally enlightened realization of our mutual privilege of being members of Christ's Mystical Body. With reason, the masters of the spiritual life insist upon this point. St Ignatius says: " Endeavour to see God and our Lord Jesus Christ in your neighbour. Consider others to be your superiors and always yield to them the first place." One of the disciples of St Bernard writes: " In your relations with your neighbour, go past the external terrestrial man and do not pause till you reach the interior man created in the image of God, redeemed by the precious blood, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the dwelling place of Christ, which is destined for eternal beatitude."

Those who are unfortunate in life are usually the most looked down upon, but Christ desires to point them out as being outward signs of his invisible Presence, not to the exclusion of others, for all have a right to this favour, only that he desires to insist upon the point that the poor have first place. " Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."[2]

Throughout the centuries faithful souls have given examples of this charity, which pierces beyond external appearances and discovers our Lord beneath the tattered garments of the poor.

" Often," says St Jerome, " Fabiola would carry the beggars in her arms; she washed their unclean wounds because she knew that by so doing she was bathing the wounds of Christ himself." St Martin, Bl. Angela of Foligno, St Elizabeth of Hungary, and many others were inspired

[1] St John xiii 35. [2] St Matt. xxv 40.

by the same thoughts; and sometimes through the transparent features of the poor man Jesus Christ himself shone forth. St Margaret Mary was never so happy as when nursing the sick.

On one occasion Monsieur Bernière, a fine Christian man of the world, was obliged, through illness, to remain in bed and could not therefore visit our Lord in the Church; he asked therefore that a poor man should be brought to him so that he could have in his room a visible sign of the presence of our Lord.

Jacqueline Pascal narrates a similar demand made of her dying brother, who said: " Since I am not allowed this grace (of Holy Communion), I wish to supply the deficiency by performing some good work, and as I cannot communicate with my Master, I will communicate with his members; therefore I am thinking of having here a sick beggar to whom the same services shall be rendered as to me."

Over the entrance door of the large hospital at Berne are written the words: " *Christo in pauperibus* "; the same motto should be displayed in every hospital. But, further still, by varying the formula we could write them, invisibly it is true, but in thought, over every house into which we enter; no more powerful means will be found to help us to practise charity in our daily relations with one another. By destiny all men are called to a supernatural life, which is the life of Christ; even in a heathen man I can, and I ought, to see a possible member of our divine Saviour; therefore clearly among the faithful this act of faith is still more imperative. Is it not because faith has ceased to be a living virtue that charity has become dead ?

II

Do we appreciate as we ought the wonders and the sublime duties which this precept enjoins? Each Christian soul is another Christ. Our divine Master multiplies himself not only in the Holy Eucharist but also in Holy Baptism;

by proxy he is all over the world; he lives in us and in countless others; our brethren constitute an enormous army of Christs. Have I the artistic sense of the true Christian artist to discern behind the human features the divine resemblance and the eternal destiny of that soul? These baptized men and women who surround me and press against me, are they really my brethren? and, if so, does my fraternal spirit rest upon a spiritual foundation? Is it in God that I love them; is it God in them that I love?

Through the divine bond which unites us all I am linked not only with those now living; my friendly relations stretch beyond the short horizon of the moment. This divine Presence (of God in each one of us) is the basis of our union in spite of the limits of time and space. In God we can always hold converse with and help one another. Because he is living within us, nothing is easier than to work through him by efficacious prayer; and since he is present also in our neighbours, there where he has his habitation, our prayers will find an echo.

In the divine character of this fraternity, as realized by our Lord, appears the striking originality and incomparable novelty of the law of charity. St John said truly: *Mandatum novum*—a new law.

The manner in which the pagans were treated up to the time of our Lord is well known: slavery was the disgrace of the heathen world; centuries of the faith were required to overthrow it, and wherever Christianity wavered, slavery reappeared. The unwanted child was thrown into the sea; sometimes, if a heathen god speaking through the mouth of a false priest demanded it, even a strong, healthy child would be sacrificed and burnt. Gradually all through the ages man has given up regarding his neighbour as a descendant of the brute creation, and has begun to think of him as a fellow human being. But no one ever suggested that our neighbour was other than the man. It was necessary for Jesus Christ to say to the world: "Look upon your neighbour as another self,

and this not in a figurative sense that has no foundation in reality, but because it is the truth. Your neighbour is me: in each of your brethren it is I, Jesus who is living, and it is for you to discover me there by faith."

The idea of the relations between man and his fellow has developed in this manner: (1) There is man considered as a brute.

(2) Man treated as fellow man.

(3) Man regarded as another Christ: " as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."

Some of the mysteries of the Christian religion are most baffling to the human understanding, but there is not one which is more striking than this " Christification " by our Lord of each of our brothers.

Henceforward the world is to be built up on a new plan. Read the letter of St Paul to Philemon and see what he says to the slave Onesimus. " Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, . . . to Philemon our beloved and fellow labourer. . . . I beseech thee for my son, whom I have begotten in my bands, Onesimus . . . whom I have sent back to thee. And do thou receive him as my own bowels. . . . For perhaps he therefore departed for a season from thee that thou mightest receive him again for ever: not now as a servant, but instead of a servant a most dear brother, especially to me. . . . Yea, brother, may I enjoy thee in the Lord. Refresh my bowels in the Lord."[1] Let us remember that this poor slave who, in the eyes of the Roman law and the philosophers, was regarded as an outcast, was addressed by St Paul as his own heart: a slave? No, he is far higher than a slave, he is a well-beloved son. St Paul asks that he shall be received as he himself would be received, and the thought that this will come to pass rejoices his heart.

The author of *Quo Vadis* has thrown into strong relief the unexpected nature of this " new commandment " in these words: " I do not know how the Christians manage to live,"

[1] Philemon 1, 10, 12, 15, 20.

said Petronius, " but I do know that wherever their teachings are followed the differences between rich and poor, master and slave, disappear . . . there is Christ alone a merciful loving-kindness unknown to us, a goodness contrary to all the instincts of mankind and of the Roman nation." It was this fraternal charity, in point of fact, which was so repugnant to pagan pride. " Me a Christian ? never ! I should have to love the Bithynian porters of my litter, my Egyptian bath-attendants, and my neighbour from Suburra. No, I certainly couldn't do this; these odious creatures deserve scorn, not love."

" As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."

In truth, this is a new commandment, so novel that even after centuries of use there should be some who have not yet discovered it.

" Charity !" cried the celebrated Anarchist Proudhon, " I deny it; it is mysticism. It is useless to speak to me of fraternity and love; I am convinced that you do not love me in the least." So it may be if we see in you only yourself, but what if I discover behind your restless grotesque form a possible Christ !

Proudhon did not listen. " Mere mysticism," he cried, and added, " I know quite well that *I don't love you.*"

" Of that you alone can be the judge."

One day an outside porter from the harbour at Marseilles was walking along beside the Jesuit father, Père Calage, well known among the poor; suddenly he said: " I hate you !" " And I," answered the Father tranquilly, " if you only knew how much I love you !"

What priest during his lifetime has not heard some so-called conscientious citizen insult him, and taunt him with the well-known accusation of being merely an impracticable dreamer.

" Self-sacrifice !" cried Proudhon. " I deny its existence; it is mysticism: speak to me of our rights, our possessions;

these form the sole criterion in my eyes of justice and injustice, of good and evil in society."

It is from such amiable unbelievers and their inverted mysticism that this uncharitable mode of thought has reached the populace.

" Nothing remains save *justice*. We claim our rights and when we have obtained them you may have a present of what remains."

Men forget that human justice without charity is often only a barbarous virtue, that a sufficient wage given by a cold heart is more humiliating than the alms of only a half-penny inspired by real affection. To turn the problem of our economic relations into a mere " question of eating and drinking " is assuredly to narrow it down too closely. It is, above all, " a question of mutual consideration "—these words are from Monsieur Havmel, originator and manager of the Christian village and factory of Val des Bois. These economic relations demand mutual respect and cordiality one towards the other, in a word, charity. Men forget that justice will not fill up the abyss; it is nearer the truth to own that sometimes it creates it, and in every case it accentuates it by underlining the points of divergence. Justice and charity have each their respective positions; justice is purely administrative; the affections have no connection with it or at any rate there is no need for them to do so. But it is the heart that preserves the balance; to talk of rights is to place men in a perpendicular attitude, facing each other, hostile, aggressive, ready to quarrel, or at best without any particle of consideration for one another, and on the lookout to take advantage of any mistake. Mutual love alone can break down the barriers. It is quite easy to start all the clubs and associations in the world, but if each of them is only a collection of self-engrossed persons, no good will be done; on the contrary, another danger-spot will have been created, and more individuals armed for the fight. Is this the end to be attained ?

A statement on paper may speak of justice and peace embracing one another: in real life it is just because charity will have nothing to do with the practical worship of justice that justice and peace turn their backs on one another and will not shake our hands.

Charity pays no heed to divergences; her eye is on points of similarity which bind men together—that is why she should go hand in hand with justice.

If right alone ruled the universe, we should have a citadel of cut-throats.

What is the true meaning of the Roman legal phrase: *Summum jus, summum injuria?*—strict justice, supreme injustice, which implies that if justice only be considered there is a risk of it running astray in practice. A virtue that has to be portrayed with a sword at its side is hardly reassuring unless a sister virtue watches beside it and keeps that sword in its sheath—the name of this sister virtue is charity.

Chapter V

WHAT SHOULD BE THE LIMIT OF OUR LOVE?

I. *The model of charity.*
II. *The exactions of charity.*
III. *The rewards of charity.*

I

THE reason *why* we should love our neighbour is, as has just been stated, because our neighbour is Jesus Christ.

Next comes the question: *how far* should our charity extend?

Our Lord might have said: love one another as brothers, but unfortunately the kind of love which exists between brothers is well known, and it is this fact refutes for ever the utopian humanitarian dream that conflicts between nations and citizens will come to an end. This bond of union between brothers, when it exists, is a fine thing.

Our Lord might have said: " Love one another like fellow-combatants fighting under the same flag, the standard of the Cross." And those who went through the Great War can testify that a strong link binds men together who have endured the same bodily fatigue, risked the same dangers, and suffered the same trials of disappointment and the intoxicating experience of success.

Or, again, our Lord might have used the same comparison as St Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians: " And if one member suffer any thing, all the members suffer with it . . . you are the body of Christ and members of member."[1] This marks a very close union, as will be seen later on.

Our Lord, without hesitation, found an illustration for his teaching in the ordinary surroundings among which he was living: " This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you "[2]—this was to be the model of our love.

What limitation is there to our Lord's love for us ? There is none; it is " *to the end* "—that is to say, not merely the term of earthly existence but to the maximum intensity of life.

What is the greatest proof of love ? To die, if necessary, for those we love, and Jesus gave himself for us.

Is our love for our neighbour modelled upon the love of Jesus ? But we are not willing to inconvenience ourselves or make a sacrifice for him !

The true meaning of charity is more the giving of what we *are* than of what we *have;* as a general rule our neighbour does not require a portion of our cloak, but he longs for a portion of our heart. Brotherly charity cannot exist unless it is founded upon love, and love is non-existent unless based upon the gift of self which is self-sacrifice. There must be a warm drop of our heart's blood resting upon each one of our acts of charity, and by this sign will their true worth be recognized.

To give one's life for another is not always required, but to live for others is needful at all times. We have a divine

[1] 1 Cor. xii 26, 27. [2] St John xv 12.

example for our guidance in this matter: the model for our love for one another is not solely the love of God-made-Man for each one of us, but also the love between the Father and the Son: " that they may be one *as* we also are."[1]

There are in the Gospels one or two disconcerting incidents that at first sight might cause us to imagine that our Lord did not realize our mean, petty nature. When he speaks of our duties as individuals he does not say: "Be good," but " Be you therefore perfect," and adds, " as my Father in heaven is perfect."[2] Our Lord has an equally exalted standard for our relations with our fellow-men: he expects us as far as is possible for creatures to endeavour to reproduce the reciprocal relations that exist between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Each divine Person in his external operations cannot act independently of the other two, and in the same way it is much to be desired that each one of us in our most trivial actions should never lose sight of the interests of our brethren.

II

The morality that disowns Christ when compared with this lofty ideal is a poor foundation on which to base our fraternal relations.

Its ambition is to create such a bond of union between men that causes of strife will disappear and union be assured; self-love is to be dissolved in the crucible of a common self-interest; they desire to form a leaven so closely moulded together that the many heterogeneous elements of which it is composed will lose their original characteristics that jarred upon each other. Can this icy current of solidarity achieve such a miracle ?

A very different current of hot air is needed to fuse the elements so that they may become one whole.

Must I therefore submit to everyone's wishes? But

[1] St John xvii 11. [2] St Matt. v 48.

suppose I have no desire to be interested in their doings and find it more profitable to keep to myself instead of wasting my time in servile attention to others? I come first, and then my union with others in as far as it serves my purpose: don't speak to me of anything further. I know well that I am dependent upon others; I suffer enough from them! I may gain some advantages from them, but I did not ask for them, though I should be quite ready to make use of them again, but if it means that I shall have to suffer for them, then I shall willingly give them up and shake myself free of such encumbrances.

Why should I sacrifice myself to others, whether in the present or the future? The present moment is sufficient for my happiness; let others do as they like. Thus a fraternal charity which is not founded on God and our Lord is powerless as a moral sanction for the *duty* of the individual to think of his brethren.

Solidarity is a statement of facts; it does not establish a right unless it goes to a higher plane.

And where is this higher plane? It is God.

It is to the honour of man that there is no satisfactory solution of the human problem unless the divine element comes in as an essential point. In God will be found the key to the human problem. And when God comes in, all false idols fall down, the worship of the true God cannot be mingled with the worship of self.

Why *am* I on this earth? To reach my destiny. Yes, but also to help those who, like me, are living with me on this earth to gain their end.

Such is the vast common enterprise in which each must take his part. Doubtless, a well-ordered charity demands that I shall begin with myself, but this will not be done by losing interest in other people. That begun, I will remind myself that these others are part of myself, and that any advantage I may gain I ought also to give them the means of acquiring.

The different members of a body do not work *indepen-*

dently neither does one act to the *detriment* of the *other*. Through Baptism we have become " one " in Christ, and are all members of the same body; and by our association with him we are of necessity associated with one another, and receive an incentive to develop this bond of union in the name and for the honour of this divine union.

It is my strict duty not to endanger this bond of union; further, it is no less important for me to be of use to my neighbour; I have no right to be an hindrance where I ought to be an helpmeet.

All the human beings who surround me and with whom I am in daily contact are my blood relations in Christ, my brothers through Baptism.

It is because of our devotion to Jesus Christ and the divine life which we share with our fellow-men in him and by him that we are bound to do good and be charitable to the members of his mystical body.

There are many occasions when, to give nature its due, men will love their neighbours; in the depths of self there is a spontaneous wave of sympathy for others. But should the day come when this finer instinct is thwarted by some brute appetite then will come to light a sharp fit of jealousy, a longing to injure someone, which can often dwell alongside with the most genuine and warmest affection in the depths of our hearts; a mere nothing suffices to change a liking into an aversion; it may be merely one or two letters in a word, or some quite unimportant action.

Man is so petty that he falls a prey to any mean suggestion; he who has so grand a destiny, frequently causes disaster by his extraordinarily narrow-minded ideas. It requires an imperious command to love, and a sublime model for this love, to make him charitable, notwithstanding the rebuffs, the cold forgetfulness and shocks he may receive.

If it is desirable that nations should live in charity with one another, see that the individuals who compose these nations are leading a Christian life and await results.

It may appear to some people who do not properly understand this doctrine that if our lives become too closely penetrated with Christ, by the wonderful power of divine grace and the presence of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity within us, there is risk of our becoming absorbed in a mode of life where recollection and a love of solitude has so large a part that our neighbour is forsaken. It is quite possible that a fuller understanding of Christian mysticism may draw some souls of a contemplative bent of mind to the prayer of contemplation; but never let it be imagined that this implies that a prayerful soul cannot also be a charitable soul. Further on in this book it will be seen that the apostleship of prayer is by no means the least fruitful of the works of charity.

Mystical writers all agree in recognizing that in the highest stage of mystic union the soul who, it would seem, would be only thinking of God is on fire with ardent desires for works of charity. When God draws a soul he does not isolate her from her neighbour even when he shuts her up in a cloister behind the grille. He only separates her from herself, detaching her from her sins, her petty meannesses, her selfishness —in reality, from all which isolates her from her fellow-creatures. There is no living person who has greater brotherly love than the soul whose heart is full of the love of God. St John writes: "If any man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother"[1]—that is to say, his love for his neighbour will be in proportion to his love for God, and history can furnish proofs of this truth.

It might appear that the revolt against God ought not to lead to the antagonism of men against one another.

What are the facts? By the sin of disobedience man turned away from God: here we have Adam and Eve; next man refused to love his neighbour and homicide appeared: here

[1] 1 John ii 20, 21.

are Cain and Abel. Unless we faithfully obey the command to love God we cannot love our neighbour; men may call one another comrades, but as the world knows, a moment before they may have been aiming a pistol at one another's heads. It has been just at the different periods of history when man had, as he expressed it, "discovered" fraternal charity that hostilities broke out, as, for example, in the rising of the Commune in 1870, and the Soviet insurrections. Men cannot be brothers unless they recognize God as their Father and our Lord, his only-begotten Son, as their brother.

It is not only on man's side that these two affections are connected; in the eyes of God love for himself and love of our neighbour appear to be equivalent realities.

It might be thought that God would by preference examine our conduct towards himself as a test of our fitness to enter heaven, and it may be implicitly understood that he is by no means indifferent to these considerations, though he does not think it necessary to stress it. But he insists upon the one duty towards our neighbour in the most explicit terms. The King says to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed. . . . For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me. . . . Then shall the just answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see thee hungry? . . And the King answering shall say to them, Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these least brethren, you did it to me." Then comes the other side of the picture: "Depart from me, you cursed. . . . For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat."[1] The same questions are put to them as to the blessed, with the conclusion that inasmuch as they failed in charity towards their neighbour, it was our Lord they had sinned against. Our Lord's meaning is clear: he who is faithful in his duty to his neighbour will be faithful to God, but the reverse statement is not so sure. Have we

[1] St Matt. xxv 35, 36, 37, 44.

not seen sometimes a soul who is most exact in her religious duties, but lets many opportunities for the practice of charity slip by? Find a soul who understands the meaning of supernatural charity and practises it, and it is hardly necessary to ask whether she loves God, for she is certain to do so.

"Whoever is not just is not of God, nor he that loveth not his brother."[1] We might add, that he who loves his brother not merely with an instinctive affection like animals, or mere sympathy like the heathen, but with a real supernatural love, he is the just man. St John remarks: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."[2]

III

"We have passed from death unto life": this is the first reward of supernatural charity.

To love our brethren as Christ understands it, does good first to him who loves. Certain stories of conversions prove this: there is someone who hesitates to take the final step: suggest to him that he shall give alms, and devote himself to some good work: nothing will more readily dispose him to give himself to God. The day will come when the neighbour behind whom God has hidden himself will reveal God; or, better still, God who has been succoured in the person of this creature, will reward the act of charity by the gift of faith.

Frederic Mistral, in his memoirs, relates the legend of the good pilgrim, which gives a fine lesson. There was once an old crippled soldier who was married to a disagreeable woman; he had made a vow to go to Rome, but he could no longer bear the journey. He called his sons—the elder ones refused to take the pilgrim's staff, only the youngest agreed. While he was on his way he had a dream and saw his mother and brothers burning in the flames of hell;

[1] 1 St John iii 10. [2] *Ibid.*, verse 14.

what could help them? He was told that he could do nothing for his brothers because they had failed their father, but his mother could be saved perhaps if before her death she could be induced to perform three acts of charity.

This was no easy task; the boy returned and, disguising himself as a beggar, he knocked at the door of his father's house and begged for alms, and through the pleading of the old man the woman made her three acts of charity and she was saved.

But if charity, as Christ sees it, can do good to him who practises it, how much greater benefit does it not confer upon him who is its objective!

It must be owned that there is little true charity in the world—that is, fraternal love—which rests on a supernatural basis such as has been described. For this reason many good works are lifeless; many acts of devotion bear no fruit, and many dead bones remain dead.

When Eliseus was brought to the son of the Sunamite, he tried every means to revive him without success. Then he stood facing the dead body and spoke to it, but there was no movement; he touched it with a stick but the corpse was immovable.

Finally he laid himself over the cold body, and breathed on the boy's lips, his heart beat upon his heart, and at the contact, Holy Scripture tells us, of this warm breath and palpitating heart, the breath of the young man returned, his heart began to beat, and he was restored to life.

Man resists force, reasoning and science, and talent—everything: but if someone does him a good action, he will yield, and all the more readily if it is based on a supernatural motive. Then his eyes are opened, his heart is melted, his prejudices collapse, former quarrels are healed, and the most inveterate misunderstandings vanish. Such a miracle, it is true, will not be accomplished on the first occasion; sometimes the person who did the good deed never sees its fulfilment; God wishes to add this sacrifice to the merits

of his apostolic zeal. But sooner or later, one day love will be triumphant; it always succeeds; there has never been known an instance when it failed and certainly there never will be in the future.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land."[1] A 1,000-pound torpedo will easily pierce the steel-plated cruiser, and the charity of Christ will pierce the brazen casings around the human heart: "Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up. . . . Beareth all things"[2]—in other words, if it has the undeniable marks of supernatural charity it is sure to triumph.

The great task to be accomplished is to restore to fraternal charity its true value as a *theological* virtue—that is to say, a virtue with *God* for its object, and this result can only be obtained by showing Christ as living or desiring to live in each of the members of the large family of God. It is not charity which is at fault, it is the spirit of faith which should underlie it. If fraternal love is purely human, it is bound to die; it requires the divine spark to give it life, and it is for us to bring this to pass.

Chapter VI

HOW OUGHT WE TO LOVE?

I. *The duty of charity.*
II. *A right understanding of the poor.*
III. *The charity of pious individuals.*

I

SOME thirty-five or forty years ago a writer in one of the well-known French monthly reviews gave as one of the essential characteristics of modern society "an almost total want of charity."[3]

[1] St Matt. v 4. [2] 1 Cor. xiii 4, 7.
[3] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, iv, p. 240.

Soon after the War a useful book was brought out: *Paris Charitable, Bienfaisant et Social.* It informed its readers that in that capital alone the number of charitable institutions reached the figure of 9,060; this shows a strong impulse of compassion towards the suffering and poor, but also a lack of concentration and a frittering of energies.

How can the two statements both be true?

There is less opposition than is at first apparent. The large number of philanthropic societies and institutions at the present day is matter for congratulation and thankfulness; but there is a vast difference between *charities* and *charity*. "But, as touching the charity of brotherhood, we have no need to write to you."[1] But is this quite certain?

In this volume it will be impossible to attempt to consider all the varying methods of practising this virtue; the subject will be limited to the duty of charity in our daily relations; it will be easy to adapt the teachings given here to other instances which have been left on one side.

Our first duty is to give *material* help to our brethren whenever this is possible.

"I was hungry, and you gave me to eat:

"I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink:

"Naked, and you covered me."

Although this is merely assistance for the body, it is none the less necessary, and the true Catholic attitude in this respect must not be forgotten. St Paul said: "Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded. . . . To do good: to be rich in good works";[2] and the Church has always defended the right of private property even to a notable degree. But it is incorrect to think that these goods are exclusively for the use of their owner and that all their superfluous riches ought, and should be, used exclusively for their personal prosperity. No, the surplus, before adding to the rich man's budget, should go to those who lack the necessities of life. It is because wealth, and above all, great wealth, has forgotten to be

[1] 1 Thess. iv 9. [2] 1 Tim. vi 17, 18.

on its guard against the evil practices of its own self-seeking, that it is forced to protect itself from the jealous ambitions of the less fortunate classes of society. When the rich man is reviled, it is not because of his wealth, but because he has made a bad use of it.

Mgr. de Ségur relates sadly that one day he was making a collection for his *work* for the *Apprentices*, and a grand lady from whom he asked an alms replied: "Quite impossible this year, Monsignor; we have been obliged to purchase 25,000 francs worth of *crassula* for the winter." And this lady considered herself a good Christian!

Nor is this an isolated instance. What extravagances and foolish expenses there are for a party, or some detail of dress or adornment! What a hackneyed theme! some people will say; yes, it is only too commonplace, though not for those whom it concerns; only for those who are obliged to draw attention to it.

On June 25, 1914, the Paris newspapers, before dealing with other news, described—some with enthusiasm, others with justifiable bitterness—a certain ball of precious stones, for which the jewellers of the Rue de la Paix had been literally stripped. The dresses had to be sewn with diamonds, and there was a rivalry between sapphires and rubies, chrysoprases and emeralds.

One of the dancers who was wearing in her hair or on her frock the wherewithal to purchase bread for 200 families, would have been astonished had she been told in one of the intervals that to obtain one of these pearls in her tiara or necklace, men had been obliged to dive down into the ocean-bed, and run the risk of a rapid tuberculosis or almost certain blindness, of being strangled by seaweed or devoured by sharks, or of being finally engulfed in these impenetrable depths. Do your task courageously forty or fifty times a day, you pearl fishers of the Polynesian Islands, so that one evening, a thousand leagues away, a baptized Christian will be able to savour the keen delight of hearing it said that she is

the most beautiful and elegantly-dressed lady in the room; that this magnificent jewel which you have snatched from the ocean depth is a marvel; it shows up her beauty in a striking manner, and by her wonderful jewels she eclipses all the other women.

It is not necessary to explore the depths of the sea in the Polynesian Archipelago: by exploring the drawers in certain houses, and by emptying the trinket-boxes on the dressing-table what a harvest of precious jewels could be gathered! To how many good works could they not give birth, and succour how many needy, and to how many embittered hearts bring the alms of a little real affection! Clearly, it would be foolish and unjust to attempt to generalize.

Seneca, in his day, pointed out two types of wise men: one who eats out of an earthenware dish while bitterly regretting that it is not made of gold, and the other who eats out of a gold dish as simply as if it were made of earthenware. Our Lord, when distinguishing between the two sorts of poverty, also shows two kinds of rich people: those whose hearts are attached to their possessions, and those who are detached. It is not the rich owner who grieves our Lord, but the man who has an exaggerated love for the goods of this world, and that which brings him most glory is less the man who has nothing than he who in his modesty does not envy those who are more fortunate than himself; one swallow does not make a summer, nor do a number of them, and for one thoughtless woman who has a frock powdered with diamonds, there are many who throw their valuables into the alms-box, and give a Christian interpretation to the words which the Tempter addressed to our Lord: "Command that these stones be made bread."[1]

[1] St Matt. iv 3.

II

We must give alms, but more important even than the act of giving is to know how to give, which means that the need of charitable works will be learned by a *realization* of the meaning of *want*. There is a comprehensive passage in the *Psalms :* " Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and poor."[1]

What does this mean ?

Bossuet, at the end of his sermon for Pentecost, gives an explanation which is worthy to be remembered because, in addition to the text, it recalls the underlying doctrine. " Do we ever realize that we are members of one body ? Have we ever shared the weariness of the sick, or sympathized with the weakly; which of us has suffered with the poor ? When I consider the calamities which surround us, the poverty, desolation, and despair of so many ruined families, it seems to me that from all sides there rises a cry of misery which ought to melt our hearts, and yet perhaps it never strikes our ears."

In the early days . . when a poor man was seen in church, each member of the congregation accused himself on his knees as the culprit, for they regarded the necessitous condition of this poor member of the church as the fault of the whole body and a bitter reproach to their individual hardness of heart. It was for this reason that they " brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the Apostles' feet, and distribution was made to everyone according as he had need,"[2] so that there should be no danger of anyone being to blame for the needs of one of his brethren.

He adds, foreseeing opposition: " Let no one object that . . . goods are no longer held in common; it will be true always that charity is in common. . . . Possessions are no longer in common through common ownership, but they are

[1] Ps. xl 1. [2] Acts iv 34, 35.

still held in common by the communication of charity, and this is the spirit of Christianity."

Are we lacking in faith? Have we been lacking in affection? Yes, there are many persons who are over-absorbed in their own selfish personal interests; and there is yet a third motive, which, alas, is only too frequently apparent—that is the lack of attention.

There is nothing more extraordinary than our faculty of going through life and hardly noticing anything.

The power of observation is one of the rarest of gifts: we see and we do not see; our eyes are open but they notice nothing, or hardly anything, and nowhere is this trait more striking than among the young people of the present day. La Fontaine says of them: "This age without pity."

This is not true: young people have hearts but they have no eyes—here is their great want. We may think them indifferent to a certain case of distress; they are not indifferent, only they have quite forgotten to look and see that this need exists. And it is easy to find proof of this. One day, when I was returning from school with a number of my companions for the Christmas holidays, a telegraph boy entered the railway carriage, and the blast of cold air which he brought in made the other boys frown with annoyance. There was hardly a free corner for the poor child; the luggage rack was full of great-coats and fur coats; the boys were handing one another sweets and cigarettes. Were they going to offer some to the telegraph boy? They never even thought of it, and I was obliged to nudge my neighbour in order to remind him. Was it heartlessness? No, more probably they were shy. But above all it was an unconscious selfishness: they did not think. How much suffering there is in the world caused by thoughtlessness!

At another school in the centre of the suburbs the boys, in their daily walks, have to brush past little bare-footed ragged urchins dabbling in the gutter. . . . Do they notice these signs of poverty which confront their rigid impene-

trability like water beating against the keel of a vessel? Listen to the conversation of each group of boys: they are talking of motors, aeroplanes, excursions, games and sports. During their holidays on the sea-shore, sauntering along, tennis racket under their arm, they meet the little fisher-lads who have risen at three in the morning to dig for worms at low tide for bait. Is it to be imagined that these merry-makers pay any attention to the working-boys—that is, to the extent of feeling some remorse that life should be so easy for them and so hard for these others? You might as soon ask the dancer whether, when showing off her pearls to the jewellers to be priced, she thought of the divers who collected them. The greater number of men see nothing and do not think. Before the War a little seamstress, working for a famine wage and obliged to sit up late to support her old invalid mother, said to me with a sad smile: "In order to keep my eyes open when 11 o'clock strikes, I sometimes have to put match ends under my eyelids." Do you imagine that the woman who loves dainty linen ever thinks of that?

Who ever reflects on the agonized moments which the mother of a family has to go through in certain disinherited households, and her distress when there is no bread for her hungry little ones?

"How old is your boy, my man?"

"Eleven years," answered the shepherd.

"Eleven," cried someone, "that is the same age as Paul."

Now Paul was a fine big boy, already nearly as tall as a man, with a round rosy face.

The shepherd considered Paul, then he said: "It is because the young gentleman eats meat."

He spoke without bitterness, and on being questioned he owned that he had eight children, and earned—it was before the War—1s. 3d. a day.

How could two grown-up people and eight children live on 1s. 3d. a day?

Raymond Brucker, the Catholic converted anarchist

working-man, said one day in a sad confidence: "Ah, you do not know what it means for your children to be starving." There are sad things that are well known, but never thought about; permit that they should be sometimes recalled to mind; every age is without pity unless it has a keen, cordial perspicacity.

Madame de Sévigné one day used this charming expression to her daughter, Madame de Grignan: "I am suffering in your chest." How many people share the sufferings of others after the example of our Lord, "who, seeing the multitudes, had compassion on them"?[1] Yet this crowd is one with us, and, like us, part of the mystical Body of Christ. Do his misfortunes affect us? Does our chest suffer with his aching chest?

St Paul knew the meaning of our Lord's teaching and, like him, he said: "To the weak I become weak that I might gain the weak."[2]

Are we Christians after the manner of St Paul?

And since preventive remedies are incomparably superior to palliatives, it is perhaps less important to create fresh avenues of charitable enterprise—often a mere drop in the ocean—than to restore a perfectly equable Christian social order.

It is a good thing to open sanatoria for the consumptive, but it is better still to ward off the risk of consumption by combating the evils of bad housing. It has already been said that the poor lying by the roadside must be helped like the good Samaritan, but is it not preferable to give to the needy proper conditions of life? Both efforts are needed, but above all the second.

A true Christian understanding of our common union in Christ in its dual aspect casts a light on a possible solution of the conflict between the classes.

If at the time of signing a labour contract, the *Our Father* were said, what a spirit of peace it would bring; how smoothly

[1] St Matt. ix 36. [2] 1 Cor. ix 22.

the negotiations would proceed! Would the employer be able to continue to treat as " hands "—to use the horrible pagan expression—his workmen whose souls, like his own, have been saved by the precious Blood, and who, like him, are called to the same divine destiny on earth and in heaven? And the working-men, will they think of themselves as merely slaves, caring for nothing but to break their chains?

There is one great thought which should override our different antagonisms—that is, the realization of our supernatural parentage; it should dominate our divergent material interests, for we are all one in the eyes of the one Father, and are succoured by one common Brother: this Jesus whose hands were roughened by the carpenter's work at Nazareth, over whose cradle the angels sang *peace to men of goodwill.* Christianity demands that the whole community shall be cared for, that not only one member shall not inconvenience another, but that all shall work together in the faith, by fulfilling their individual tasks in a common enterprise, the recompense for which may be unequal here on earth, but will be equalized in heaven, and Christianity alone can achieve this task.

Many Catholics, even frequent communicants, have a selfish Catholicism; they go through life with blinkers on and have no fellow-feelings for mankind. The enemies of the Church delight in pointing this out, and use it as an argument against her, but it is not the Church's doctrine—which is beyond reproach, and so vast in its range—that is to blame; the fault lies in the incomplete and inconsequent manner in which we put it into practice.

The fact of our one union in Christ makes it incumbent for us to each bring our own contribution towards the good of the community. We are not on this earth to make use of others, but to serve one another; and if God has placed some of his children in a subordinate position as regards their fellows, it is in order to bring out the fine virtues of obedience, self-denial, and poverty, and those who exercise authority

and have riches are bidden not to shut themselves jealously away behind their privileges, but to look after their less fortunate brethren, and as far as is in their power to soften the lot of the less favoured.

Magnificent works of social betterment are being started on all sides, under the inspiration of a strongly underlying Christian spirit, for the benefit of both workers and employers, and are a great source of happiness to the rare persons who take a practical interest in the delicate problems of the life of the people. These philanthropic enterprises are not always understood or encouraged, sometimes they are even met with opposition on the part of those who should be most ready to help. This is a type of good work requiring much sagacity lest it fall off the lines, and much energy to carry it through; the initiators are sure of success provided they remain faithful to the dogmatic principles of the Gospel, which the popes, and especially Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical—*Rerum Novarum*—have made known to the world in those highly valuable letters which are so little known.

But incomparably more distressing than bodily wants are the ills of the spirit.

One of the French academicians recounts that one day, when he was visiting the museum of Cluny, he witnessed a curious scene. On one of the window-ledges there was standing a carved crucifix: three children came and leant on the sill; the smallest had to stand on tiptoe to see it. All together they considered the crucifix, and their faces showed blank astonishment. The eldest said: " Look what an unhappy expression they have given to this man." He said, " this man," for he did not know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for us. Then the little one asked: " Why does he hang his head; it looks as if he were crying. Don't you think so ?" They were not making fun of it; they were trying to understand what it meant.[1]

There are many of these children, more than ever would be

[1] René Bazin, *Le Douce France*, p. 91.

imagined, who do not know how to pray, to whom their mother has never taught the blessed name of Mary, who have never received the Body of their Saviour in Holy Communion, who live as if none of this existed. There is a pitiful story told of two soldiers who were dying on the battlefield, and each was encouraging the other to pray, but they did not know how to do it. At last, after recalling their early memories, they managed to put together the first phrase of the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary*, and they repeated them in Litany up to their last breath.[1]

It is necessary, like the army chaplain, to have gone through the sad experience of having to succour a dying man at a dressing-station or in the trenches, and to have been able to discern scarcely a spark of faith; that was the moment for the harvest to be gained, but the seed had to be sown and the minutes were hurrying by and death was impatient. The lad opened his eyes: "Tell me, father, shall I see my mother?" He wanted to understand; he wished to be reassured. Ah, how barbarous are those who deprive these unhappy children of the eternal truths!

The greatest act of charity for this present time is the gift of light. Many people despise or hate the Church because they do not know her. The words of our Lord on the Cross are always more and more true: "They know not what they do."

The more material and earth-bound a need may be, the more readily it excites compassion; the less it pertains to this world the more easily it escapes notice.

Not everybody has the consoling though sad facility for aiding the needs of man's soul. Those at any rate who sooner or later from their position will have to direct others, ought to reflect on this duty. An ample purse is good, but a large heart is better; and more preferable, because it governs all the rest, is a broad-minded understanding of the meaning of want.

[1] Henry Bordeaux, *Voici l'heure des âmes*, p. 279.

" If sorrow becomes bearable to me it will have to be the sorrows of my neighbour.'

No, the right understanding of the poor which the Psalms and the Gospels teach has nothing in common with this barefaced egotism; it is quite the opposite.

III

The greater number of persons who read these pages will be those whom it is customary to call pious folk.

It is said that it is a speciality of pious people to be naughty—at least, their tongues are naughty. On the one side they build up and on the other as it were, in revenge, they make up their minds to pull to pieces. With God all is sweetness, with their neighbour—at any rate the one they don't like—all vinegar. Is it worth while to go to Holy Communion so often in order to flay the reputation of others to such a degree? Let there be less piety and more true charity. Without taking to ourselves this accusation merely because it is often repeated, let us endeavour to refute it by being on our guard against it.

In point of fact, it is easy even for a good person to laugh at his neighbour, to criticize and misrepresent, and pass judgements on the pope, the bishops, his parish priests, his superiors, his equals, and that sometimes with a virulence which, were it not quite unconscious, would be very serious. It is so easy to insinuate something it is desired to make known without formulating it in exact words, to lead the conversation into a scandalous quarter, and carry it on with allusions, shakings of the head, little grimaces. There are moments of silence that mean much, a lifting of eyebrows that disfigure a memory, pretensions which are nothing but accusations, compassionate glances which are very close to evil speaking or calumny.

It is so easy in a family to exercise a petty tyranny while loving one another much. " It is the wicked who do harm, but the good who make us suffer "; and nothing is more true.

There are different mentalities; everyone is not equally sympathetic about the same things; a mere nothing can lead to misunderstandings if not to disputes; and the most innocent actions can be misinterpreted. For no apparent reason persons will refuse to be separated from one another, and conversely they will declare that they cannot bear to be together.

Then, beyond the family circle, there are the active works of charity; it is so easy to be wanting in charity in philanthropic works. There is rivalry among those who want to direct, misrepresentations as to the use of methods, underhand pulling of strings. And on the pretext of the fuller development of the work, how easy it is to sweep away all those who do not see things in the same light and do not adopt the same methods ! It is possible to be working in the same field of action and yet, because one individual is of a different social or mental type to another, instead of helping they ignore one another, and even perhaps try to hinder their prospective enterprises; only our own set of friends and ourselves are capable of doing good.

It is said that women are more liable to commit sins against charity. What a sad result of certain sterling feminine qualities !

Women have keener intuitions than men; men have five senses, women a hundred. They are apostolic—that is to say, they love to share the discoveries they have made with others. It has been calculated that the words spoken by a man in one year would fill fifty-two volumes; double that number would be required for the sayings of his wife, and they cover a variety of subjects.

It may be readily understood that unless a woman is especially on her guard it is difficult for her not to wound her neighbour's feelings, more especially when there are several of them gathered together.

On these occasions, as is well known, qualities are added up, failings are multiplied.

It was for this reason that St Teresa did not wish there to be more than twenty nuns in each of her convents. "Experience has taught me," she said, with a sparkle of malice, "what a house full of women can be; God preserve us from it!" It is to be hoped that her words were not strictly accurate.

And is man quite irreproachable in this respect? Alas, no! Here also there are rivalries, petty jealousies, meannesses of all sorts; a keen eye may detect such failings among both priests and laity. Proselytism—properly understood—and Sectarianism have nothing in common, though from Proselytism—ill-understood—to Sectarianism it is only one step.

But it is unnecessary to dwell upon these distasteful details. Here is someone who is very sympathetic, very devoted, and most charitable, but he may not quite enter into the fine distinctions necessary in charitable works. His features are forbidding, and anyone who wants to speak to him must study his mood first. "How shall I approach him to-day?" It was not so with our Lord.

"Be inexorably good!" said Père Chaumont, the founder of the Congregation of the Daughters of St Francis of Sales; nor is the word too strong. It is necessary to be good without relenting if we wish to be as good as it is possible to be. To smile on the person who inconveniences you, to do a kindness to someone who has annoyed you, not to notice a lack of attention; to listen always, always to give help, to pardon always, and not only always be good, but to let it appear—if this is not heroic virtue, it certainly is the road to it.

BOOK III

THE LAW OF SOLIDARITY

Chapter VII

THE MYSTERY OF OUR SUPERNATURAL INFLUENCE

I. *The influence of each individual on the whole group, and of the group on the individual.*
II. *Nothing is lost.*

I

THE greater number of Christians are labouring under a mistake; they know that they have been redeemed, but they do not realize that they have to do their part in the work of Redemption by labouring to redeem their brethren.

It is God's wish that all men should be saved, but this wish is not absolute; God does not say, " In spite of them, and without their help or the assistance of others, I will fix their eternal destiny," but rather, " with them, by them, and thanks to the help of their brethren." This is a reminder that, together with the divine liberty, there are two freewills co-operating in the redemption of the world. In the first place, there is our own individual freewill; and, secondly, the free-wills of the rest of humanity. In other words, each man is master of his own destiny, and everyone in a certain degree —which we shall endeavour to determine later on—is a master of his neighbour's destiny.

It is this last point which is of interest for us, for it puts before us the law of our mutual interdependence in the spiritual world, the close solidarity existing between Chris-

tians. The world has need of the supernatural; as branches of Christ, we are also united by him to our fellow-men.

A comparison taken from a system of water-pipes will make this clear: If the outside of one of the pipes is tapped, then immediately all the other pipes coming from the reservoir begin to vibrate. And if a drop of water is poured into any one of the pipes, it will pass into the other pipes, however infinitesimal the amount, still it moves on, ever rising until it reaches a point where it runs down and it continues downhill. Each person is responsible for his fellows, and they are responsible for him; not one of us can act alone; if one is wearing the chains of a galley-slave the progress of the whole group is impeded; if, on the other hand, he frees himself from some hindrance, all the others will be more free.

Thus every act of merit or failure committed by any one of the members aids or harms the whole body. The day when we came into existence we were given the power of either drawing our neighbour nearer to God or of keeping him apart. In the world of physics, one atom cannot be displaced without running the risk of all the other atoms being set in motion. In the moral and supernatural world, united as we are to our fellow-men by our common life in Christ, we can both help them and injure them, and their eternal salvation can depend upon the good or the evil we do to them.

God owes it to himself to give to everyone the means strictly necessary in order to reach heaven; it is a question of justice towards each individual. But God requires that the superabundant graces by which these strictly *necessary* means will be given their full *efficacy*, should be obtained *in common* —that is to say, by the sum total of the merits of the whole Christian people. From the very fact that every Christian is a member of Christ, the well-being of the whole body will of necessity have its influence upon the health of each individual, hence the share of well-being which I individually should contribute to the whole body.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world; he is *all*—the Head *and* his members. He is above all, the Head; and secondly, but of necessity, we are the members. He is the Saviour with a capital S; we are saviours with a small s; but none the less saviours in the true sense of the word and in a really effective manner, and with more power than is ordinarily imagined.[1]

What an important work it is to be able to vitalize the conviction in many Christian souls, that not only have we a personal share in the redemption and the mysterious workings of divine grace so that we may grow in holiness, but still more we can become the active channels of certain possibilities and occasions for grace in the lives of others; that we are not merely destined individually to receive the influx of divine life, but even to lead it to flow into our neighbour's soul. If divine strength is slow in coming to the assistance of such and such an occasion of weakness in others, it is quite possible for us to ask that it may be given more quickly and to render the divine action more penetrating, and inspire the soul to correspond more rapidly to its impulse. It is possible for us to make God more victorious since we are not only the redeemed in a passive sense, but redeemers in an active sense.

When God is in opposition to the human will which refuses to give way, he is only vanquished in appearance. Supposing even that the soul persists in its obstinacy, justice will intervene one day to restore the equilibrium and render to the Lord of all the honour which is his due. But often God does better than this, for he uses human wills to break down human licence. That soul is resisting grace, that is true, but far, far away in space and time another soul is praying, is offering himself and doing penance. The marble

[1] In theological language this is the exact meaning: Christ only has merited for us *de condigno*, that is to say, in strict equivalence: creatures can merit *de condigno* for themselves an increase of sanctifying grace, but can merit for others *de congruo*—by simple convenance.

was intact without a crack, and behold how, through the pressure of a seed in appearance so insignificant, the block was raised, and then fell into bits, and a humble yet triumphant blade of green appeared. Whence came that grain? The soul whose fetters are snapped asunder by a happy repentance will never know; but God knows. What joy, if suddenly these interactions could be revealed to us, if the *reality* which is ordinarily invisible, could all at once rise up before us!

If by an intensely vivid spirit of faith our eyes were open to the supernatural, we should see these particles floating unceasingly through the air which surrounds us. Every free action is an "august gesture"; it scatters the seeds abroad; a minute of time can make a whole world fruitful.

We can take a still more immaterial form of comparison. If in the world of physics there are waves of sound that can make an impression on delicate mechanism and transmit messages from an immeasurable distance, the moral world is furrowed also by invisible waves, which are extraordinarily powerful and penetrate to the depths of men's hearts and illumine obscurities which up to that time have rebelled against all light; they awaken sentiments believed to be for ever dormant, and bring to life the will which is dead. And the power to send out these supernatural waves with their powerful echoes, does not belong only to the highly initiated, privileged persons who are distant one from the other. Without doubt saints are rare, but every Christian, praying as he ought, working his best, living a good life—that is to say, in a state of grace—has the power, by his prayers, his labours, and his life, of reaching other souls—maybe in great numbers.

Everyone admires grand architectural feats—the engineering skill which builds towers and bridges with consummate skill—but they do not give a thought to all those who, in the luminous obscurity of the invisible world, and the only world that counts, are working for the temple of Christ's Body,

which is the Church, and by their merits, known only to God, are opening the way for sanctifying grace to pass from our Lord to those who are separated from him, and bind them to him again.

What a magnificent work this is! To be able as it were to complete God's action, to make divine grace efficacious, and by each of our words and actions to become a labourer for God's kingdom. God only asks to pardon, and it is for us to aid him in carrying out this merciful object, and I am allowed to do this. One prayer, one sacrifice; if I follow it to its goal what shall I find? God's forgiveness: his pardon which comes to earth for this unknown sinner, and which heaven was waiting to grant when man would make the first movement. God only asks to send a ray of light into this darkened soul, and we must help him to accomplish the designs of his infinite wisdom, and this lies in my power. My prayers and sacrifices rise like the fleet steps of children climbing the stairs of the lighthouse; everything is prepared for the light to be cast over the horizon; God only waits for a hand to touch the electric button which will liberate the current, and send rays of light to that ship in distress, pointing out the dangerous passage and comforting her with the assurance that the harbour is near.

II

Can our miserable puny efforts add anything to the efficacious power of the precious Blood? No, we cannot add to it; to a sacrifice of infinite value there is nothing lacking. But our human efforts give to the merits of Christ the means by which it is applied to us and reaches to us.

There is only one Redeemer, but every truly Christian soul should be a co-redemptress; God is anxious to have our assistance. And if he calls for our collaboration it is not from weakness on his part but from an excess of mercy. He is not wanting in strength, but he so esteems us that he condescends

to utilize our feeble efforts to prepare his path. That our nothingness should assist in the great work of the salvation of the world, confers a sublime dignity upon man.

In the book *In Christ Jesus* it was said that every Christian ought to be *another Christ*, for he should reproduce in his personal life the thoughts, feelings, affections and desires of Christ. Here the same idea is taken up, but with a new or rather a fuller meaning. If every Christian should be another Christ, he ought to be the means of giving greater scope to the life of Christ; he should be this other Christ as fully as is possible and co-operate in the work of redemption by the maximum holiness of his life, the maximum apostolic zeal in his words and desires, and the maximum enthusiasm for self-sacrifice, and a ready acceptation of duty.

"Either an apostle or an apostate." This is true of every Christian: each man and woman has within him or her the possibility of saving the world; but this does not mean that he is free to save it or lose it as he wishes. Every Christian, by the fact of his Christian heritage, cannot refuse to intervene in the lives of his fellow-men; he is either a dead weight or a living weight, an instrument that helps or hinders, for here, more than elsewhere, not to help is to do harm. The world contains two types of individuals: those who are in a state of grace and those who are in mortal sin. Beyond this there is no distinction in God's eyes, neither Jew nor Gentile; they are either living or dead, nothing else matters.

And if a soul is living, and because it is living, it must do service.

If it is dead, not only is it harmful to itself, which is certain, but it infects the whole body by depriving the whole body of the assistance to which it had a right, and on which it counted. The arm that is severed is not only inert and worthless, but it deprives the body of multiple means of assistance.

In the moral world far more than in the physical world nothing is lost; everything reverberates; every soul is the collaborator of either God or Satan. We are all, by our destiny, " servants of the servants of God," and we should help God's friends in their task, or at any rate not hinder them. But what obstacles a single mortal sin can place along the path of the human race towards God! One infected member can be a source of mortal danger to the mystical Body of Christ.

No individual can live for himself alone; by the fact of our membership with the collective mystical Body of Christ we are bound to labour for the well-being of this whole Body of Christ, or at any rate, not interfere with it.

Marshal Joinville, in his account of the crusades, remarks how the Christians were assisted by our Lady in their repulse of the Turks, and added: " She would have done far more for us if we had not angered her, she and her Son." And the Turks knew this also. " John Firmin, who was the king's gunner, was going to Damascus when he met a very old man. The old man called him to him and asked if he was a Christian, and when he replied in the affirmative, he said: ' Then you Christians are much to blame: formerly I saw King Baldwin overthrow the Saracens, and he had only three hundred men, while the Turks had three thousand. But now you are so weighted down by your sins that we drive you like cattle across the country.'" Let us not be less clear-sighted than this old Turk of whom Joinville speaks.

Chapter VIII

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

I. *To edify always.*
II. *Our unconscious actions.*
III. *How to foresee the effect of our actions.*

I

THE preceding chapter has shown us our influence upon others by *what we are.* But, in addition, we can influence others by that *which we do,* or rather by what they see us do. If our inner life can exercise such an immense power, is it extraordinary that its outward motions are able either to assist or hurt our neighbour ?

Wherever we are, even if we are alone, we are still bound by invisible links to the rest of humanity. The most insignificant of our human acts can have incalculable results. But what of our other actions to which heaven can bear witness ! Their effect on others is even greater.

There is that author; he uses his talent to glorify the truth, and he is read. Many people follow his lead, share his enthusiasm, and climb to his level. Then there is another, whose books are corrupt—a public poisoner: 100,000 copies of his book are sold, which means 100,000 typhus germs spread abroad, and perhaps long after his death his books will still be carrying on their dangerous work. The souls who have received harm by reading these books have only themselves to blame for having given way to the temptation, but what about the responsibility of the author for these victims ?

His excuse is that he only wrote for himself and for amusement.

Such a thing is impossible. Count de Mun, at a reception at the Academie Française, said: " Can the man of letters, in the intoxication of his creations, forget that others will

come and drink at the same stream? Can he contemptuously disown the influence of his writings upon others, as the wayfarer shakes off the dust from his sandals? No, and he knows this quite well."

We admit that this is serious, but my actions, my insinuations, this consent that I gave, are negligible compared with such important doings. Do you imagine, then, that it requires a heavy weight to deal a death-blow? Cannot a drop of water make a glass full of water overflow; a pin-prick set up blood-poisoning; one explosion let loose a revolutionary insurrection? A barely visible misunderstanding may lead to hatred and an open quarrel. The largest avalanches are set in motion by the melting of a little snow; the conflagration of a whole village begins from a burning match that has been thrown to the ground; the shipwreck of the biggest liner is caused by its impact with a floating block of ice.

A mere nothing can trouble a soul; it is so delicate and ready to receive impressions even when it appears to be least affected. A sound in a room where there is a violin can set up a vibration; and the human soul is an extremely sensitive instrument on which the slightest sound will find an echo that may be permanent. Who has not noticed children leaning over the parapet of a bridge and amusing themselves with throwing stones into the water and watching the concentric rings moving over the surface? However small the stone may be, and however distant the shore, the water is covered with ripples which spread indefinitely.

We take our stand beside a group of light-hearted young people. Consider not only their behaviour but their undying individualities with their promise of unknown hidden possibilities. In childhood outside influences are readily received and eagerly, though unconsciously, sought for, a fact which should make all who have to do with children exercise great prudence.

If it is true that no one knows how far that gesture or that word may go when the witness has been of no

consequence, how much greater the ignorance if a child is present!

Yet to what lengths people will often let themselves go before these retentive little minds; they do anything, they speak of everything, they let all sorts of pictures be seen, and excuse themselves by saying it is well known that children do not understand risky or immoral allusions. But is this true? Even when the child does not understand everything, he catches hold of certain details, or questions himself to find out others, and it is fortunate if he does not run and interrogate one of his companions so as to discover the solution of the mystery.

And people imagine that all this is of no importance. But nothing is without value when said or done before a child; everything has an effect when he can use his eyes and read, and its action is the greater because his mind is not able to resist external impressions. It is not yet cast in its mould; the metal is still warm and malleable, therefore one or two blows of the hammer can make a weapon for God or for the Devil.

When the thought of the stupendous influence of these early youthful impressions is brought before us, we realize how sad it is that many persons do not dream of making these impressions as pure and high-minded as possible.

Our psychological training—not to say our moral sense—is to blame; each of our mistakes and faults, which these charming, though dangerous, little beings have witnessed, will have made its indelible impression. It may have been thrown into a recess of their mind, like an old toy cast into the bottom of the cupboard; at the time they did not take it in.

Don't be too sure. One day they will understand, and who will be the responsible person?

In addition, that which is true of early childhood and school age may be affirmed also up to a certain point of the whole life. We have no right to commit an action in the presence of someone else which is capable of leading astray those who hear and see us, not even if those around us are of a mature

age who, it might be imagined, would be able to resist and so would not be hurt.

We have within us at bottom a bad streak, a sort of deep-seated cowardice, which leads us to seek out every opportunity of finding an excuse for our frailties. What is the effect on us of our neighbour's misdoings? It is an encouragement given to our latent powers of evil; a passion which, although up to now it was passively menacing, under this fresh impulse becomes active, for we now have a proof that that which we thought was *never done* is really something which *is done*, and an instinctive protective sense of shame is thrust aside so that the approach of evil may be possible. That which we see others do is an excuse for us to follow their lead, although up to that moment we should have avoided even the thought of such a thing. We should have blushed at the idea of bringing this illicit desire out of the hidden obscure depths into the crude daylight, whose existence we barely acknowledged; now it is blatantly visible before our eyes. In one second an explanation, almost a justification, is found for these unjustifiable appetites; we realize that we are not alone in our degradation, and in this way the first step downhill is taken.

How many people have given way solely because they saw others do it! One deserter can lead to the rout of a whole company. If we let others see too much of our sufferings we shall lessen their courage; rather let us imitate that soldier who, when terribly wounded, seized his handkerchief, not to staunch the blood, but to put it into his mouth and prevent him from crying out: "I mustn't frighten my companions," he said.

We should always try to *edify* by our example, and never to cause harm and disaster.

To edify is a fine word meaning to build. We must be of those who have an elevating influence on others and raise them up, never lowering them, and still less causing their ruin.

St Augustine tells, in his *Confessions*, how, when he was a

young man, he joined forces with his fellow-students, whose set purpose was to overthrow everything; he calls them the demolitioners; and those individuals are equally demolitioners, and more odious still, who scatter broadcast the seeds of death and cause the downfall of a soul. " Woe to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come; but nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh. And if thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." And our Lord adds: " And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it out from thee. It is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."[1]

Yet there are people who amuse themselves by giving scandal and by teaching others how to do evil.

To give scandal is literally to follow Satan and adopt the devil's trade. It is to snatch one of God's elect from him, at least for a time, and maybe for ever; to give scandal is to kill, and to kill a soul. Few men would think of taking up a knife from off the table and from light-heartedness plunging it through another man's heart. But what is the body in comparison with the soul? The world is full of men and women who kill souls, murderers, those who destroy divine grace in the soul.

How many people are there who, at the moment of causing their neighbour to do wrong, ever question themselves as to the heinous nature of the crime they are about to commit? They are so blinded by passion that they see nothing. If, in the bottom of their hearts, they are not completely demoralized, they will say to themselves: " I will repent later." Yes, but what about the other person, him or her in whose company you are going to do this evil? How do you know that he will repent? Will God give him the time for it? And if time is granted, will he wish to repent? You have

[1] St Matt. xviii 7, 8, 9.

placed a soul on the downward grade; how can you tell whether, through its many falls, it will not finally tumble into hell? You would have known how to stop yourself —I hope so—but can you be certain? Is not this over-presumption? But if you do succeed, what about the other person? And if the fall downhill leads to an eternity of misery, what a responsibility you are incurring! Here lies the terrible risk, the awful danger of this dual wrong-doing. The point is that we are not merely responsible for our individual sins, but, in addition, for those of this other person, and of all the future sins which this evil-doing will lead to. Each sin means two sins on the conscience, two at the very least, and perhaps a large number of others.

II

There is yet another thought which is even more important, and that is the consideration of our unconscious influence upon others, even when we have forgotten all about it.

One of the most apostolic of the Parisian clergy was one day visiting a hospital when he came upon a young consumptive opera ballet-dancer, whose health had been completely undermined in a short time by her mode of life. But amid her most unruly excesses and her worst follies, she never lay down to rest without first repeating a *Hail Mary*, because when she left school one of her companions, foreseeing perhaps the dangers to which her friend would be subjected, said to her: "Promise me whatever happens always to say a *Hail Mary* at night." She had faithfully kept her word, and that the priest, in spite of enormous difficulties, was able to come to her assistance before her death, was owing to our Lady's intercession in the first place, but also to her devout girl companion who, in a friendly way, had induced her to make this good resolution.

This girl probably never knew that she was to a large degree responsible for the eternal salvation of this ex-dancer.

We do not realize the value of every soul, and of the most insignificant thought, word, or action, which can assist in determining the destiny of this or that person. Nor do we know how eagerly heaven registers our interventions. We are ignorant of the fact that the least important events that take place on the most inconspicuous days contain hidden within them the seed of a new life, and that it depends on us, our generosity or our thoughtlessness, whether it is trodden under foot or scattered broadcast for the benefit of the world. The following imaginary story has been written to give a living picture of the future results of certain of our actions. Can it really be said to be imaginary?

A young Breton girl was in service in Paris. Her master and mistress were "good Christians." One day the master of the house received a number of theatre tickets. He called the servant to him, and said: "Here, take these; they are of no use to me. You can throw into the fire what you don't want. Madame wishes it." Throw them into the fire? The other servants? But the little Breton was not much impressed, so that they said to her: "Yes, you are to come with us."

On the following Sunday, towards 8 o'clock in the evening, in a distant village, two old people were exchanging confidences round the fire. "What a pity Anne-Marie is not here," said one; "she has written."

"What can you expect? She wasn't able to get off."

"You think that is the reason?"

"Oh, the master said, 'She will be like our own daughter: she will never leave the house. I am responsible.'

"I don't know why it is, but sometimes I feel distrustful."

The poor old mother had a reason for her suspicion. Anne-Marie, so innocent up to that moment, was at that very hour in the first row of a music-hall, the witness of a shameless performance. Did the master of the house ever dream that her innocency had been destroyed by himself? People will say in excuse: "I never thought about it," and it is just this which should make them blame themselves. You are

free to make any movement you like, and to throw your match wherever you wish, but if you fling it into a paper box, are not you responsible for setting it on fire? Everybody can walk out into the street, but if their clothes give scandal they are responsible.

The heedlessness which determines the greater number of actions of the majority of people is stupefying. Who ever pauses to think that what is taking place *now* will have its result most probably *later on?* We live and move, we make and mar, create fresh habits and tyrannies without taking into account that they will reappear or at any rate run the risk of reappearing in their own time and place. No one can venture to say, in spite of successive alterations and reappearances, that this actual psychological episode had nothing to do with that wrong action of bygone days which now is quite forgotten. It is not the moment when the mine explodes which causes the most forethought; for days and nights mysterious men have been seen bringing the reserves of explosives for the fuse that has been laid far away. Even if the detonator does not go off, the warning will be given by the outbreak of fire.

Since all our actions have their effect upon posterity, it is our duty to see that they do not exercise an unworthy influence. If in the first case a death germ has been introduced, rest assured that one day or another this evil germ will appear, unless some extraordinarily neutralizing influences have here and there made themselves felt. But when it is not a case of metaphor, but fact—not of abstract, but of true parentage—then these principles have a great importance.

No one is forced to be the father of a family and have a long line of children, but if he marries he should remember that he can only pass on what he already possesses He should ask himself whether what he has is of any use.

Thus both in the natural and supernatural order the impenetrable action of men upon their fellows and their far-reaching influence on one another is to be seen in all its

grand and sometimes tragic power. And since the sphere of this influence can be indefinitely enlarged, it is not a necessary condition for the individual to have foreseen all that his action would entail, in order to be responsible for its most distant results. The cause is the justification of the effects: facts are more logical than men; we may have forgotten the initial act, but that does not prevent it from being responsible for the series of events which it has set in train.

"I never foresaw that this would happen." "Exactly, you ought to have done so." If it is true that we are only responsible for the consequences of our voluntary acts, however confusedly we may be aware of them, it is none the less true that we can be held responsible for not having foreseen them when we ought to have been on our guard Nothing can prevent a certain number of our actions from being involuntary, but can we escape blame for having been so often thoughtless?

People forget that prudence is a virtue, and a cardinal virtue, and that its property is to help us in making provision for the consequences of our actions.

III

There are many people, far too many, who when they perform some action about which they are doubtful, ask one another: "What will they say?" But this is of small importance.

They should rather ask the question: "What will they do?" or venture to hazard the remark: "What will be the effect of this word or action or behaviour on my part, or the consent of my will to such and such a course, whether outwardly apparent or not, upon those around me? Will they bring good or evil, joy or sorrow; will they sow the seeds of hope or despair, envy or contentment with what life brings?" To each individual is given the command to occupy himself with his neighbour's spiritual and bodily welfare. St Paul, in the Epistle to Timothy, writes: "And this give in charge

that they may be blameless. But if any man have not care of his own and especially those of his house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."[1]

Can those lukewarm Catholics whose bad example furnishes a weapon for the use of the unbeliever, be said to be really interested in their neighbour's well-being? They remember the Church in order to run her down and despise her, but not to honour her and win for her the esteem of others. It would have been better had such persons never belonged to the sheepfold, for they do more harm to the Church than her open enemies. We are responsible for the impression which our Lord Jesus Christ and his teachings make upon our neighbours; upon us it depends whether they scornfully remark: "If this is a type of a good Catholic, I shall not have anything to do with it." Or with admiration: "Can religion produce such an effect? What a splendid thing it must be! I wish it could come into my life."

The defection of certain Catholics, and worse still, the fact that many souls are hindered from coming into the Church, does it not come in a large degree from the tepidity and indifference or the eccentric religious behaviour of a great many Catholics, who are so adroit in trying to harmonize certain exterior practices such as frequent Communion, or taking part in good works, with a disconcerting taste for frivolous amusements. In the morning at Mass; at night at a ball in a frock such as no good Catholic should ever wear. She is often at Holy Communion, but in such a décolleté frock that, before approaching the Communion rail, she should have attended to her toilet. She comes to Mass, but her manner of assisting is so visibly distracted that it is quite evident she is only there from habit or because it is the thing to do. She is foremost in divers philanthropic works, in which the organizers show much want of charity, and practises her religion; but along with it goes such a flagrant ignorance of the social obligations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that it

[1] 1 Tim. v 7, 8.

might be thought that, as far as the relations between different classes of society are concerned, we were back in the better days of paganism.

Many people would be converted if we showed ourselves to be the true disciples of our Lord. " Go and preach," said St Francis of Assisi to his companions when they came out of their monastery to beg. " But, Father Francis, we are not going up into any pulpit !" " You will preach by your good example."

Perhaps they may often have brought to mind the words of the peasant man, when St Francis asked him for the loan of his donkey for a longer expedition than was usual. " Is this really Father Francis of whom everyone is speaking ?" " Yes." " Well, then, take care to be as good as men think you, for many people have placed their trust in you." It would be a good thing if many persons would pay more attention to the possible result of their influence so as better to make provision for their carelessness, their negligence, and imprudences.

In the days of the czars there was a governor at Kostrowa, who, when papers were presented to him for his signature, cared so little for their contents that he gave his signature without looking at them. One day one of the servants amused himself by slipping into the budget a paper containing the following statement: " I am at last convinced of my total incapacity: here is the list of my chief failings and of the principal mistakes of which I have been guilty." When Stolypin, the head of the Cabinet, received this document, correctly signed, he approved of it by dismissing the negligent governor. How can anyone sign a paper which will entail the condemnation of another, without reading the statement it contains of misdoings for which he is to blame because they might have been foreseen ?

On the pages where our life history is written, there are lines written in ordinary ink; these are known to us. But an unknown inexorable hand adds some interlines in an

invisible writing. And if we have the courage to try and read it we shall find there a whole collection of characters and hieroglyphics, crowded together, which maybe will petrify us.

If there are all these unknown developments underlying my footsteps, how is it possible to live in peace? Would it not be better to be condemned to remain immovable? These are absurd fears and unreasonable scruples. Because we realize the power of our influence we are not thereby condemned to be in an agony. We must not be afraid of responsibilities, but know how to discover them where they exist, and take them up without exaggeration and not try to run away. We should resolutely resolve to refuse to ignore the result of our actions.

There has been written an imaginary dialogue between Pilate and one of his friends, towards the close of the former's career.

"Wasn't there an uprising down there when you were procurator of Judea, which concerned a man who was called the Christ? I have forgotten the details but I believe he pretended to be one of the gods from heaven. You crucified him, didn't you?"

"That may be; I have forgotten all about it."

Can the excuse be made that the hands were washed in running water so that, if the water was tinged with red, there was no time to notice it, for it ran so fast?

Prevent it running for one moment and take the trouble of looking at it: frequently it will be coloured with remorse and you will feel obliged to murmur the words which the Church suggests to you in her Psalms: "Cleanse me from my unknown sins."

Our actions are like flakes of snow; let us amuse ourselves sometimes, and it will be a salutary meditation, in following the passage of these little snowflakes which our hands have just thrown; we see them cross space, and suddenly stand still at the end of their course, or rebound and fall down some slope they come across. They seemed to us so inoffensive when

they left us, and maybe they may have done good and helped to refresh someone who is ill. But they may also have caused the loosening of an avalanche, and down in that crevice there are some poor wayfarers; it is not God's wish that they should be killed.

We are on earth for two reasons: to build up virtuous actions for ourselves and happiness for others.

Can it be said that we are producing happiness for our neighbour in a marked degree?

Chapter IX

SINS OF OMISSION

I. *The fact and dangers of "omission."*
II. *Omission in the "beginnings" of life and in its "later" developments.*

I

TO act as has been seen is to produce: but the sphere of our influence is greatly enlarged when we realize that *not to act* is also productive, though in the first case it is positive and in the second *negative* in its inception.

Do we pay sufficient attention to the existence and result of our sins of *omission?*

In the last days of the War, towards the end of October, a clearing station had been established in the cellars of a presbytery in Argonne. There was only one practicable road to the rear, and in order to keep it in repair the men were ordered to fill up any shell-holes. They did not pay great attention to their task; some branches and gravel thrown into the yawning gaps seemed to suffice and the road appeared to be quite even. During the night there was an attack, the enemy was trying to slip past, and the French lost some of their men. The clearing station was soon overcrowded, and a first convoy of wounded was despatched in an American ambulance belonging to the divisional ambulance corps. It was to send back a relay which would come

back for a fresh consignment. A long time elapsed and still the other ambulance did not appear, and meanwhile, the wounded were flocking in, the cellar rang with anguished cries: "Will they never come for us?" The head doctor sent one of his cyclists to reconnoitre. "It is easily explained," he reported, "the road is blocked some distance away by a convoy of American artillery on their way to the front; in the darkness of the night, one of the wheels of a gun-carriage has become embedded in one of the holes that had not been adequately filled up, the vehicle turned right over when trying to turn and now lies across the road; it is quite impossible to pass either way." Until day came nothing could be done, and many of the wounded died, who, had they been quickly carried off to the dressing station, might have been saved.

It is scarcely necessary to mention the incident, imagined by a philosopher, of a workman who passed by a flaw in the steel bar he was constructing, then, touched by a scruple, he did his work all over again so that it might be quite perfect. The angels showed him the appalling accident which he had thus avoided: the bar was to form part of the framework of a bridge, and had it not been absolutely solid, the bridge would have given way under the weight of a passing regiment, and 600 men have been either crushed to death or drowned.

True facts need no apologies; it is sufficient to grasp their meaning, which is incalculable. The soldier who does not keep strict watch permits the enemy to surprise his companions. The workman who is not conscientious over his work is responsible for the rupture or breakdown that ensues: so also is the medical student who idles over his work for that human life which, one day, his lack of medical knowledge will be unable to save.

It happens sometimes that our sins of omission not only affect men's bodies, but also their souls; not merely some particular interest, but one of a general character, and not solely the life of one nation but of the whole Church.

At the time of the Separation laws, a terrible blow was dealt to religion in France. People let things be and tolerated them as had been done at the period of the Expulsion laws. Even when it was decided to intervene, it was done in a manner that was too often platonic. And the result was, that the persecutors became the masters. In a scornful tone they answered the address of an inert minority. "You have protested? There are not enough of you."

It is well known that many people do not vote at elections: in France there are eleven and a half million electors: a little more than half of these use the vote, the remainder from laziness, inertia or obstinacy, keep away: frequently the effect of their behaviour is plainly visible, but many of those who are responsible forget most certainly to accuse themselves.[1]

Examples could be multiplied indefinitely: later on two especially sinister effects will be pointed out. For the moment there are several general considerations to be presented.

We can commit sin both by doing something which is wrong and also by not doing what is commanded: in other words, to commit and to omit. In the words of the Catechism, we can "sin by thought, word, deed and *omission* against the law of God."

Now the great danger of sins of omission is that so often they pass unnoticed. There are occasions of sin the approach of which make us afraid, the sight of their shadow drawing nearer puts us on our guard. But in this case it is not at all the same: an omission does not cast its shadow before it. Although it is a reality, it has no form, but is impalpable, invisible: it is of its very existence not to be seen. Other faults have a real consistency. Here the fault lies in its very inaction. It is not a presence, but an absence, and it is the fact of its absence which causes it to escape notice. Hence man couples together the two ideas of innocence and abstention from action. Now certain occasions of

[1] The same reproof could be made in this country also, where many persons abstain from using their vote. (Translator's note.)

abstention are criminal, and there are many sincere baptized persons who, if they had a clear sight and were sufficiently courageous honestly to examine their consciences, would find themselves to blame on this score. The following method of self-examination suggested by someone who is very modern is not humorous, but very distressing:

" I accuse myself of having heard sermons without listening to them, of my deep ignorance of Catholic writers both past and present . . . of only having given a half-hearted attention to my religious knowledge . . . to have among my books neither Bible nor New Testament . . . that, although I am a well-known Catholic and take part in nocturnal adoration, I have never read through either the Gospels nor any life of our Lord. I accuse myself of having looked upon divine grace as merely a shelter and protection for myself rather than something which should be put to use, a personal guarantee instead of a valuable gift . . . of thinking that the time spent in prayer has the same importance as, or rather, less importance than a tea-party."

What a catalogue of failings are to be found in certain so-called Christian lives, that are due either to lack of foresight or of generosity.

" My God, my faith in thee is very weak. I love thee with *half* my heart, *half* my soul, half, perhaps even less, of my mind."

Fontenelle is reported to have made this sinister remark: " If my arms were laden with good things, I should take great care never to give them away."

It is indeed a terrible thing to have the power of bringing happiness to others, or of letting them share some inspiration, and to refuse to do so: to be surrounded by human beings, and to do nothing to enable them to live. When we resolve to examine our consciences we are forced to own that: " These immortal souls were at my door; I might have saved them, but I would not deign to hold out my hand to help them."

Then there are the duties of the person who is bound to set

a good example by word and action, and those who are under a general obligation to help their neighbour: in these two cases, of strict justice or of pure charity, the obligation differs, but its importance is manifest in both instances. We are responsible not only for what we are aware of, but for that which we ought to have known; not only for what our powers will allow us to accomplish to-day, but for that which we might have done had we made the most of the many opportunities of developing them. We shall have to give an account of the merits we have gained, and also of those which we might and ought normally to have acquired. If we could but realize man's intense need of that which *ought* to have been *given* to him: here and there, and indeed almost everywhere, there are lost opportunities and resultant disasters.

For the loss of a good action does not only mean *one* good act the less in the world, but *many* others that have been stifled in the germ: we have prevented an act of virtue, a kind word, a generous impulse, from coming to life, and think of all the good which might have come from them. Because we refrained from word and act and were lacking in self-control, we were guilty of wronging our neighbour who had need of that word and act, and of the example of our self-mastery. We have left marks of blood behind us.

It is because St Francis Xavier was unsuccessful in part of his mission that there is such a gap in the work of christianizing Asia. On the other hand, it is because Luther never failed, that the Catholic life of Europe triumphed. It is a complaint that God's kingdom never seems to come any nearer; but were all those who ought to have been helping it forward, to be found at their posts when required? Each one of us has to bring his stone towards the constructive work of redemption. During the 2,000 years that Christ has been working how much second-rate work has been done, how many badly-cut ill-shaped stones have been brought! He, the Master, is always lavish and generous in doing his share of the work, but with many of his workers there is a

general strike here, and a slackening, negligence, and laziness among others. The majority of Christians are unaware that they have an obligatory part to play in the work of the Redemption, and what is sadder still, our Lord's own close followers, those from whom he looks for support, remain callous or stupefied. It is lucky when one or other of them is not attempting secretly to undermine the rock on which the Church is standing.

If it is true that every baptized person ought to look upon himself as being in part responsible for the salvation of the world, how much stricter will be the account he will be called upon to render, who, by profession, has undertaken to be a qualified disciple of our Saviour Jesus Christ!

Father Lallemant taught the young men whom it was his duty to train for the priesthood the following lessons: "There are souls," he remarked, "whom God has resolved can be only helped by us. If we fail them, or do not adequately carry out our ministry, they will remain unsuccoured. We never think," he added, "of these kind of failings, yet their results are disastrous. God knows what account we shall have to give one day for them."

If the visible results of our omissions are of so great importance and so terrible, what will they be in the life to come?

Dante has been blamed for having placed in the highest circles of hell many damned, who, during their earthly existence, did nothing positively wrong, but were without doing active good, who lived as it is said, "without shame and without merit," and certainly this point, to be theologically exact, requires elucidation. But it is a curious fact that when our Lord was giving the motives which would govern the sentence of condemnation at the judgement day, he only mentioned sins of omission.

"I was hungry, you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink,"[1] etc.

[1] St Matt. xxv 42, 43.

There are five heads for complaint, and each one is for a good work that was left undone.

Evidently our Lord does not mean this to be a complete list of faults, nor that there are not others, but this emphasis laid upon sins of omission should be remembered; for it is just of these which we think of so little account that our Lord thinks the most. It is clear that we shall have to alter our point of view.

II

The dangerous character of these sins of omission, and their tragic significance, will be more readily grasped by considering two periods of our life where they are most harmful and where it is imperative to find an adequate remedy; these are in the beginnings of life and in its development.

This question of birth control has already been treated in a little book called *Unique*.[1] It refers, as the name implies, to the limitation of the family to one child.

Imagine the case of two parents, who, instead of putting marriage to its lawful uses, only regard it as a means of enjoyment and refuse any responsibilities: life is a plaything for them, but they do not wish to contribute to its expansion.

Do they realize the loss which the mystical Body of Christ is suffering by their thus restricting the number of its members and running counter to the divine plan? "What does it matter," they say, "whether there is one person less on earth?"

In the first place, is it a case of *one* person? No, it is thousands. Normally, this one child would have married, he would have carried on the line, and his children would have married in their turn, and their sons and daughters would have had descendants. But the tree has been cut off in its early growth, no trunk will rise up out of the ground; the branches, with its fruit ripened by the sun, are condemned

[1] *Unique*, by Raoul Plus. Paris, Lethielleux.

to wither. One man never saw the light of existence, and through the loss of him ensues the loss of the many who would be his descendants. It might be said, because life was denied to one man, a thousand deaths were brought about. When Cain killed Abel, and God reproached him for his crime, he did not say, as is given in our version of the Bible: "the voice of thy brother's *blood* crieth to me from the earth," but in the original the word blood is given in the plural. Cain only wished to kill *one* man, Abel, but in reality it was a whole race whom he struck out of the book of life.

In the fourth act of Rostand's play, *L'Aiglon*, the young Duke of Reichstadt has spread out before him the plain of Wagram. He has a dream and there passes before him the memory of all the military campaigns undertaken by his father. What a number of men have been sacrificed! they are there lying on the ground in thousands. Suddenly he sees them raise themselves up; they speak and reproach the son of him who brought them there, and make accusations against him. L'Aiglon is seized with fear at the spectacle of the torrent of abuse which flows from these countless phantoms.

Those who were sacrificed by Napoleon were a vast crowd, but a no less tragic number of lives are sacrificed by a selfish spirit in married life or a misplaced prudence. What an army of sins of *omission* there are! Who can ever venture to calculate their innumerable effects; for heaven how many fewer elect souls, for the Church how many less apostles?

"And now, Lord," said Tobias, "thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever."[1] "We have deliberately limited the number of God's elect," said Limerel, the father, to his wife in a famous dialogue in René Bazin's novel, *La Barrière*. What a gulf between the actions of these biblical characters and those current at the present time!

[1] Tobias viii 9.

Not only is the Church triumphant the poorer, but the Church militant is deprived of its most valuable combatants.

More priests are needed: the religious communities who are called to double ministrations have not sufficient numbers. Meanwhile, the needs of the Church are on the increase, the bishops appeal for help, souls are dying of hunger, and a hundred works demand workers. The harvest is ripe, but the labourers are not forthcoming. How is it possible to find boys for the priesthood and the cloister in families with no children, or only two or three? The priest has the power of multiplying souls, and it is for the Christian family, by doing its duty, to give us as many as are necessary of these supernatural multiplicators of souls.

In the later *developments* of life, sins of omission take a tragic position.

To educate signifies etymologically to bring out, to raise and enlarge: we speak of "bringing up" a child, and if he is not "brought up" will he attain the lofty *stature* which is destined for him and of which the world has need?

What a great mistake it is to wish to bring up and raise a child by neglecting God, the one eminence which dominates everything! What species of education is it which only omits one thing—that which explains everything else, without which nothing can exist? Children are given an encyclopedic knowledge: only one point is left out—God. As if the teaching about God were in itself a denominational subject, and not before all things a matter of the most elementary philosophy, the greatest question of all and the one reality.[1] An effort has been made to persuade a child at a baptism to recite the Creed: but the answer comes back: "I don't know it." "What have you learned at school?" "About vertebrate animals."

[1] In February, 1923, the head of the Education Department authorized a new syllabus for primary schools; the commandments of God were not included. Up to that time the godless school, though too often in existence, was illegal. On that sinister day of February it became legalized.

Some twenty years ago, I was giving Catechism in a suburb of Amiens, and I put the question: "Who has told you not to steal?" Answer: "The policeman." "What will become of you after death?" "I shall become a skeleton."

And the sad point of all this is, that it is intentionally brought to pass. "We must not do anything to burden a child's conscience. When he is older he can choose for himself."

This is a false principle of psychology: everyone adopts the teaching of something or someone. You say: "When he is twenty he will choose." How absurd! He made his choice long ago, and since he was refused the teaching of the Church he has followed that of his lower nature, with its vices and passions. Is it such an easy matter to keep straight even with the help of the Church? What then will be the result of following this other guide?

Some parents pretend that "there is nothing bad in what the child is being taught." That may be, but, at any rate, he is not learning all the good he ought to know: think of all that he is not told and that ought to be his.

This statement is not an attack upon the masters and mistresses of the lay school, among whom are many who regret this sinister omission: it is the teaching itself that is to blame, these lessons that have been cut down, pared away, and impoverished, from which all touch of the supernatural has been removed, which these illustrious "great men of importance," these puerile giants, have obliged them to give.

To teach is a fine career: the teacher must be not merely one who knows, and can express himself clearly, but a man who possesses two qualities, not very often found together in one brain: the gift of exercising a firm though gentle control over his pupils, and, without violating their independence, of knowing how to pass through barbed wire defences, to venture across forbidden territories, and overcome every type of opposition, aggressive or indolent, in-

voluntary or intentional. It has been said that "teachers and professors are the masters of the world," and the expression is not an exaggeration, but it is heavy with consequences.

What an honour it is to gain souls in order to give them to God, or to give God to them, and what a responsibility! But to venture to touch these nameless depths, to guard against pitfalls, and whether we will or not, to come into contact with eternity, and to find we have nothing save some finite expressions to give to this soul, who, in spite of these hindrances, is thirsting for heaven.

Anyone who attempts faithfully to fulfil his task has great difficulty in avoiding sins of omission. Things which were not said, or which should have been suppressed or expressed differently, what a source of unhappiness they are for anyone who teaches and realizes the weight of his task! Perhaps the whole truth has not been stated, some point of ambiguity has been left behind, only a partial, confused explanation has been given, and the pupil has not a real grip of the subject. What about those persons who, through force of circumstances or the conditions of their employment, are forced to leave out the essential truths, or else they will find themselves thrust away into the background? The poor teacher whom Bazin has immortalized, even before her return to God, makes this sad remark: "I have only sown barren seeds." What a sad and poignant omission!

SECOND PART

THE THREE GREAT MEANS OF APOSTOLATE

BOOK I

THE EXTERIOR APOSTOLATE

CHAPTER I

THE VOCATION OF THOSE WHO SOW

I. *A burning generosity.*
II. *A penetrating clairvoyance.*

I

THE sower walks abroad to sow his seed.

Whatever we do, all our actions and gestures, even our intentions, scatter seeds abroad. All these seeds will not bear fruit, but they possess the power of so doing; even our omissions are endowed with this redoubtable power.

But in addition to all those who unconsciously sow the seeds of their thoughts and actions, there is an *élite* who, stifling in the heavy atmosphere of their own self-interests, search for a broad field, where, in the morning mist, or under the shafts of the midday sun, the plough can dig straight furrows and the seed be cast to the four winds.

The sower walks abroad to sow his seed. We must make wide spaces for our field of action, for there are enemies waiting to attack. Let us be up and doing.

The world swarms with narrow-minded people: the really large-hearted individuals are extremely rare. It is a common remark for people to make: " From the moment that I have gained what I want for *myself*, what matter to me the concerns of others ?"

A smaller number will say: " What does it matter about myself ? the welfare of *others*, their happiness or the lessening of their unhappiness, their eternal salvation, that is what

concerns me, and nothing else." Such persons have the apostolic vocation.

You have perhaps seen these unknown persons going forth on their errand of mercy in the early dawn, and they may have annoyed you: you asked yourself what could be the motive which impelled them to go out like this, while the rest of the world was asleep, and would continue to doze even after it was aroused, and face this dense rolling fog or a wind that pierces to the marrow of their bones. The motive power which controlled their actions was this: "Self-devotion is required—here am I. There is work to be done—where? I will go."

"But it will be difficult!"

"That doesn't matter, so much the better. We are not made only for soft jobs."

A generosity that sees clearly and so is not taken in, but instinctively embraces work that is arduous: this is the mark of a true apostle; his heart is on fire.

We are told that one day the devil appeared to St Brigid, and she asked him his name. He answered: "I am the personification of a cold heart."

The apostle has, *par excellence*, the divine imprint; a burning ardour runs through his veins. Satan is like an iceberg; he loves no one and can only hate: the apostle is on fire: he loves, and because of his charitable aspirations he has an immense ambition, a desire to go forth and conquer, and a burning thirst which nothing can satisfy. Such remarks as: "Why waste your affections on these worldlings? you will get no good out of them," mean nothing to him. This selfishness, a product of Satan, either ignores or despises the needs of others: the worldling is an immortal soul who must be brought to Christ.

There are certain people who, sad to say, have everything that they want; they are tormented with no fruitless longings, or, if they have any, they are unimportant. They would be astounded at the words of a young man during the War, who

remarked: " I am most ambitious and full of mighty projects." This is certainly an exaggeration, they would say. Their chill breath withering our enthusiasms can be felt.

We are not speaking of foolish undertakings, nor must a reckless spirit be confused with an apostolic zeal, nor a desire for mere adventure with a thirst for the salvation of the world.

But we affirm: woe to him who is bound up in an easy-going, narrow mode of life, who would not mind if the world came to an end provided he was not touched: woe to the egoist.

" I would be either monk, highwayman or knight," said Théophane Venard.

What would be our secret ambitions; if we could create a silence within, whither would our desires take flight ?

The dreams of youth often resemble a flock of seagulls on a stormy day, who now direct their flight upwards, and then, caught by the wind, come down to find a refuge in the trough of the waves, or among the garbage and wreckage on the shore which the waves have thrown up.

Where the atmosphere is bright, and the sky clear, our ambitions are like a band of migratory birds, who take it in turns to lead, and with their strong unfaltering flight cut across the horizon in a long mobile triangle, and so straight is their line that it might be supposed that their keen eyes had pierced the trackless skies and discovered a route invisible to us but just perceptible to them.

There are also those weaker ambitions which slowly wend their way down and down and far away, and finally become lost; but which, even when all trace of them has disappeared, still have power, and whose great virtue is that they have given the mind noble aspirations.

It is said that Roland Garros, the intrepid aviator who, when he was made prisoner and escaped to Switzerland, continued his flights until he was struck down, used to amuse himself in the evening in studying a map of the world and

marking out the grand aerial flights which would soon be possible to intercontinental relations. Immersed in these thoughts, hours slipped by like minutes, and often he was discovered stretched across the table fast asleep, his arms clasped round the atlas, while, in his dreams, his imagination roved through unknown realms.

II

The first quality of a true apostle is a burning *generosity*, and the second, a wonderful *perspicacity*.

Many people never discover anything about our Lord, except what all the world can see: the true apostle is less superficial.

He sees the disturbing mystery of the apparent failure of the redemption of the world: he knows that Christ on the Cross died for all men, and that for many, only too many, it will be of no avail.

In some corner of the infinite, there are souls who are undergoing the torture of eternal separation from God, and each day death brings a fresh harvest of the damned. Four persons die every second; how many will be among the saved? And if every man is not saved, what has been the use of the redemption? Why the sacrifice of our Lord, why the Cross, if the possibility of damnation remains? The mind tries to picture the agony of our Lord during the three hours, and earlier in the Garden of Gethsemani: Jesus gave his life for all men, and at what a price! Two steps away, on the further side of the brook Cedron, a man is hanging from a branch of an olive tree, as if to say: "I will have nothing of this redemption, thy Blood shed for me is useless." It was Judas, and with him are all those of his type who refuse to be converted.

The deeper a soul's realization of the mysteries of Christ, the more readily is she drawn towards apostolic work, and the greater her zeal for it the more important is it for her to learn about Christ.

" You must understand," said our Lord to a Poor Clare, " that the sufferings of my heart were without number. . . . I am the head of the body and all Christians are the members, and many of them are and will be snatched from me by mortal sin.

" What suffering a criminal goes through if one of his members is violently wrenched off, and what was my martyrdom when I thought of the countless souls who would be torn from me, some for a time, others for eternity, through having committed mortal sins.

" Now you must realize that the pain caused by the cutting off of a spiritual member is as much greater than the separation of a bodily member, as the soul is superior to matter. It is impossible for you to understand these acute sufferings of which I am speaking, which have been renewed so often that they cannot be numbered: to mention merely the damned, ' every lost soul means a member snatched from my body.'"[1]

These multiple sufferings of the divine Head are a great grief to the soul who has remained a faithful member of his mystical Body.

Lord, have pity on all these members who have gone astray: on them and on us have mercy. I want to glorify thee, but not alone; to love thee and embrace thee, but in company with others. To love God is to have the wish that all men should love him. By my prayers, my exhortations and tactful explanations, I want to bring thee as many members as possible, so that all men, joined in one splendid union, may sing their Magnificat. It is a happiness to the faithful soul that he is a living branch, but how many withered branches there are lying at the foot of the tree: the trunk shows large gashes where the branches have been lopped off. Something must be done to graft the broken branches anew upon that poor bereft vine, so that the sap may freely run through them again.

The true apostle is like the child who, distressed by the sight

[1] Blessed Baptista Varani, Poor Clare, 1458-1527.

of the falling leaves in autumn, gathers them one by one and tries to fix them on to the branches; he yearns to gather these souls that have fallen away and join them again on to the divine tree, so as to heal the wounds in the Body of Christ and restore to them the divine life. There is nothing lacking to the merits of our Saviour crucified, it is only those who should apply the merits who are wanting: how is it possible to refuse to become an apostle? The invisible world should be such a reality to us, that when thinking of such and such a person the thought should spontaneously rise to our minds: "Is he in a state of grace or not?" to which is added the prayer: "If he is not, may God bring him back, and if he is all right, may God keep him there."

How many Christians realize that the air is full of appeals for help at every moment, which signify to him who will listen that there are people in distress of body or soul: but alas, these innumerable demands are usually ignored.

Every moment of day and night, hertzian waves are traversing the atmosphere; how many persons are attuned to catch the feverish S.O.S. cries of the lost souls, of the heathen, the tempted, the fallen; the appeal of the missionary asking for help, of the priest crushed by the weight of his burden, the moans of little children asking for bread, and the exclamation of our Lord: "The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few"?[1] The apostle finds that his supernaturally enlightened affections act as a priceless register of these impressions from without: it is they who give penetrating power to his vision and an extraordinary acuteness to his hearing.

When Just de Bretennières was a little boy he used to amuse himself with digging a hole in the sand, and then kneeling down and putting his ear to it. When his mother asked whom he was listening to, he replied: "The Chinese who are calling me." In later life he was destined to receive the crown of martyrdom in China.

[1] St Luke x 2.

We all remember the encyclical letter, *Maximum illud*, written by Pope Benedict XV, on November 30, 1919, on the Propagation of the Faith in foreign lands. Pagan countries have not our prerogatives, being deprived of Christianity, but in our lands it is much easier to learn about the faith and to remain faithful to its teachings.

If parents and teachers were as solicitous in interesting their children in these poor souls who have never known Christ as they are in paying their yearly subscription, the rising generation would more readily grasp the blessings of Christianity and be filled with apostolic zeal. They would not only have a burning longing to enjoy the full riches of the supernatural life, but would wish to go and call back these souls who have never known their divine heritage, and to give them the incomparable privilege of being united with our Lord.

Chapter II

THE THIRST FOR SOULS

I. *The "sufferings" of the apostle.*
II. *The "serenity" of the apostle.*

I

IT is not sufficient for the apostle to be generous and clear-sighted: he must be magnanimous and not allow himself to be thwarted by obstacles. By obstacles is meant not so much external difficulties—such as those St Francis Xavier had to put up with when his work was held up by Spanish captains or rajas—but those interior troubles due to wavering doubts that are the ruin of good works.

If the worker has a clear vision he will realize both the great need of these souls and the absurd inadequacy of the means at his disposal for assisting them.

Souls are being lost eternally; how can he save them all with his humble forces ?

What power can he have against the wilful opposition of some of these persons? Will he not collapse like a gunshot against a steel plate ?

Every apostolic soul, unless he is either foolhardy or blind, is bound to experience the trial " of feeling himself so weak in spite of his high calling." When the voices told St Joan of Arc what she was to do, the unfortunate girl replied: " I am only a poor girl, I can neither ride on a horse nor know how to fight."

When God called Jeremias to his mission as a prophet, his first words show how cruelly he realized his limitations: " Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child."[1] Jehovah had to stretch forth his hand and show him that he would help him. In the same way Isaias said: " Woe is me . . . because I am a man of unclean lips."[2] and one of the Seraphim put a live coal on his lips.

God said to Moses in the burning bush: " Moses, Moses. . . . But come, and I will send thee to Pharao, that thou mayst bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

And Moses said to God: " Who am I that I should go to Pharao and should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"[3] God had to reassure him several times, and is it not remarkable that the two first miracles which God performed for the assistance of Moses were more to give the prophet confidence in himself than to make the people trust in him, since the changing of the stick into a serpent, and the healing of the leprous hand, were only witnessed by Moses.

As a general rule the impression that there is an abyss separating the apostolic worker from the souls that need his labours, does not appear at the opening of his career, but at the end of a period of time.

What day-dreams we have had ! As God's servants we had big ambitions and aspired to make grand conquests. We

[1] Jer. i 6. [2] Isa. vi 5, 6. [3] Exod. iii 4, 10, 11.

pictured a large concourse of people elbowing one another to get near and hear the divine teaching, souls who, disgusted by empty words, are searching for a saving Gospel. At the age of sixteen, the words of the Gospel shine like gleams of light, and the boy says: "I will make others see, I will proclaim everywhere that Christ is the truth, and people will believe what I say.

"If some Pilate grumblingly asks, 'What is truth?' I will disdain to reply; such a person is in the minority and is a self deceiver." The case of Barabbas preferred to Jesus was quickly passed over and only served as a fresh incentive to our zeal. "Poor crowd, so easily led astray, I will go to them, and if all of them will not listen to me, taken individually they will not refuse to hear."

Then the day comes for the first contact with the crowd, and the apostle needs a single-minded zeal, great hope and a living faith for his task. A crowd of people is a pitiful spectacle. Among all these people, some coming from work, others on their way to amuse themselves, what can the apostolic preacher do? How manage to compete with the attractions of the neighbouring picture palace, which draws into its midst an excited enthusiastic throng, in many cases to their moral undoing?

Does he realize that this working-man who brushes past him has been taught by his newspaper "to drive away the divine microbe, and to have nothing to do with this place where the merchants of paradise are swindling the poor inhabitants of earth"? And this paper is read by millions: it is not a good preparation for listening to the words of eternal life.

This workgirl who is devouring the novel which a clever friend has lent her, will she learn in these pages how to practise the sixth and ninth commandments? How many of the large number of children's nurses are really trustworthy? The answer to this question can be found by wandering down the avenues and quieter thoroughfares in the evening.

But there are many people who are good: very well then, let us consider them.

We will leave on one side the true faithful souls, who take the part of the angel who consoled our Lord in his Agony: what of all the others? There are those who are asleep, or, may be at this moment, they are debating whether a certain act of betrayal is worth doing; or if they do not go so far as this, they are trying to whittle down the truths of the Gospel, and belittle the Beatitudes; they only like the crucifix when it is made of bronze or is a work of art, and adopt a comfortable kind of Christianity without either cross or crib.

If only we had the power of bringing a chrysalis to life, and could succeed in giving the message of the life to come to these souls who are encased in the silken web of this present life, to these Christians who are only too accustomed to a superficial view of everything, and give high aspirations to men who are poorly endowed with a sense of the infinite!

If we could contrive to instil into the mind of the self-satisfied person the great advantage of a profound discomfort, and, in a word, transform these prosaic terrestrial lives into a canticle of joy and sorrow, the hymn of the creature trying to conform himself to the measure of Jesus Christ!

We feel the weighty significance of the saying: "You are gods," and lament that many people forget it or do not think of it sufficiently; and it seems to us as if the whole of humanity were dependent upon us. We realize the obligation of all baptized individuals to become "sharers in the divine life," and we are cut to the heart to see them sharing—in what sort of life? It is well known that God should be "all in all," and it is equally well known that God only holds his rightful position with a very few, and in a great number of cases he is nothing.

One day when Lacordaire was feeling particularly lonely, he turned to Montalembert and said: "How powerless man is to help his fellows: of all the miseries of life, this is the worst." And we are condemned to see the flood of humanity

rushing past us to amusement and what is useless, to nothingness, to hell.

What use to try and make a voice heard above this turmoil? But this is not true.

An Arab proverb runs: "If you cannot be a star in the sky, be a lamp for the house" And a recent occurrence shows how, when vigorous arms are not forthcoming, puny muscles can suffice, with the grace of God in this instance, to control a lighthouse that illumines the ocean. On Belle Isle, New York, the sailor who had charge of the lighthouse suddenly fell dangerously ill one day when he was cleaning the lamps, and had to go to bed. There were only himself, his wife and four children, and they were a mile and a half away from the nearest cottage. The wife could not leave her husband's bedside, for he appeared to be dying. Suddenly one of the children cried: "Mummy, the big lamp is not turning."

The sailor had not had time to set the watch for the revolving light, and these boys of ten and seven passed the night in pushing the lamp round and round, turn and turn about, with their small hands.

The wayfarer does not always know to whose forethought he owes the guiding light.

Every apostolic worker ought to remind himself of that legendary missionary who, passing through a city at midnight when everyone was asleep, was inspired by God to pause in the large square and to give an address. He spoke for some time, standing quite alone in the darkness, then he continued his journey. Several years later a man came to see him, who, formerly, had been a great sinner and now was a saint; he told him how one night, when he was on his way to join his confederates, with whose assistance he was going to kill his enemy, he heard through the stillness of the night a voice proclaiming the forgiveness of injuries and the eternal pains in store for those who commit murder. He was filled with terror, and repenting of his crime, he went off

to be reconciled to his enemy. " It was on such and such a day, in the public square of that town," he said to the priest, and the missionary bowed his head and adored the mercy of divine Providence.

It is not only our actions, however feeble, that are the instruments of man's redemption, but also our grief at our inability to do more, and this last is a more potent factor than the first

Our Lord proclaimed this fact when he spoke of the ripening harvest, stretching away as far as eye can see; only a strong arm wielding a sharp-bladed sickle would be able to cut down the heavy ears of corn.

Where is this powerful arm to be found ? and the need is urgent. God's reaper need not be afraid: God loves the humble sickle, and the labourer who has to bend to his task: he values the hidden efforts of these obscure workers more than the brilliant successes which can be seen: for one name that is known, how many are there which will never be revealed ?

God counts less the results than the efforts: the many acts of renunciation are the most precious fruits in his storehouse. If he wanted to succeed, would he have taken so long about it; could he not have garnered the harvest long ago ?

" One angel could have done it with the sweep of his wing." But the master of the field considered that more glory would be done unto him by the laborious efforts of several apostolic workers than by his own instantaneous and startling triumph.

In our narrow-minded way we calculate everything by the *result:* if a general is not victorious, he is worthless; a teacher who is not successful in passing his pupils through their examinations is useless; a lawyer who allows his client to lose his case is a bad lawyer; and, in point of fact, to judge by results is for us poor humans the best method of appreciating the value of human nature. God has other means; he certainly wishes that we should do our utmost for his glory to succeed, and he looks for our intelligent efforts in this respect,

but he does not apportion the reward in accordance with the measure of success. He sees, too, this faithful soul making a sacrifice of appearances, and the sense of humility which comes from this failure is more meritorious than the most brilliant success. The immense advantage of the invisible world is that there to lose is to gain. A man is drowning, but all efforts to save him are of no avail—humanly speaking, he is lost: but from a supernatural standpoint the charitable inspiration which prompted that other man to go to his rescue, though unsuccessful, is morally a grand victory and will have its effect. The body may be drowned, but the soul, through this act of charity, may have been saved: our acts should be measured by an invisible scale.

We dream of rapid wholesale conquests for God's glory, but no supernatural work prospers when judged according to our finite standard. From the time of our Lord and the first apostles down to the present day, has God's kingdom made the progress we should wish?

It might be said that God gives his apostles some impediment to prevent them from gaining their end too rapidly, or from being too successful, as if he prized the love which inspired these efforts more highly than their results.

St Francis Xavier died in the midst of his labours at the age of forty-two: he was stricken down by fever at the very time when the great empire of China lay within his grasp. He lay dying at Sanchan, facing the land which in dreams he had visited so often, and where he would never set foot.

But who can say whether our Lord was not more glorified by the longings of St Francis at Sanchan than by his sojourn at Travancore or Malabar, where his arm dropped paralyzed with fatigue at sundown, from the large number of baptisms he had given?

The apostolic worker will never be able to pitch his tent more than halfway on the road of his ambitions, but the aching regret that he cannot do more is so meritorious in God's sight that his failure does not appear to be too high

a price to pay for it. The mass of these unachievements are moulded together by God into an impregnable force: individually these efforts appear to be fruitless, but if taken all together, their combined strength has an irresistible impact.

He who would draw men into his net must never lose courage: at God's time, he will take the draught of 253 large fishes of the Gospel narrative, without counting the small fishes.

II

It might be thought after reading these pages, in which the sorrows of the man who tries to save souls have been described, that the apostolic worker is condemned to have no joys, but to live a life of bitter disappointments; since, however devoted he may be, and however keen in his work, his zeal will never be satisfied, and the wider his aims the more crushing the disproportion between his aspirations and his achievements. In reality, if he has grasped the mystical life of our Lord, the sorrows of the eternal salvation of humanity will be powerless to upset his peace of mind: they may stimulate him to fresh efforts, but they do not overpower him nor distress him unduly.

May be in his field of action he will find himself up against a high wall, the ill will of those who are inimical to him, the indifference or hostility of those who are supposed to be friendly, and his methods may not be very wise; but, however restricted the results, his courage never falters. In the words of St Paul: " And we know that to them that love God all things work together unto good: to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints. For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son:" that is to say, that these souls to whom he has preached the Gospel are destined to become members of Christ's mystical Body, " whom he predestinated."[1] " Being

[1] Rom. viii 28, 29, 30

justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."[1]

To determine the choice of those who are predestinated to be members of Christ's Body, there are three elements which must concur:

The measure of grace given to each individual;

His individual correspondence with it; and

The co-operation of those who are called upon to preach the Gospel;

and it is this last alone which is in the hands of the workers.

If the apostolic worker knows that he is conscientiously doing his best, he will not be in a hurry to gain his end: he is both enthusiastic and sober-minded, and spends his energies without counting the cost, so that many may come to God and thus correspond with the divine plan. His ministry is peaceful: for the building of the kingdom God desires well-selected material—workers who are faithful to their vocation of labouring together for the spread of the Church whose corner-stone is Christ himself.

If the priest comes across some difficulty his ardour may be momentarily abated, but it is never rendered inert; there is the same motive power controlling his moments both of discouragement and success.

Of God's predestinating choice he knows nothing, save that it is founded on mercy: and of man's licence he equally knows nothing, except that, with God's help, a mere trifle will bring him into subjection and sufficient grace will change him into a useful individual. He has his own share of the work to fulfil: God only requires that his apostle shall succeed when it is in accordance with his providential designs. But the exact proportion of effort which will be necessary to attain this end, he does not know: therefore he can never say "I have done enough." The longing to do more and more always remains. Even if it should be thought that God's servant, in spite of his labour, can only exercise a

[1] Rom. iii 24.

meagre influence on his flock, yet there still remains a vast field of action within his grasp, and that is his own spiritual life.

The success of the missionary does not correspond with his efforts; but may it not be that the work of the priest in his own soul has been half-hearted: is he sufficiently near to God, as detached as he should be from creatures: or to express it differently, is his interior life sufficiently real?

People often put in opposition to one another—in theory if not in practice—the interior life and the active life of the apostolate, as if the interior life implied lack of interest in the eternal salvation of souls, or the apostolate presupposed that the interior life was thrust into the background.

The first supposition will find its refutation in a coming chapter; as regards the second, we should remind ourselves that only an intensely real interior life can make a ministry bear fruit.

In principle, the active life of the apostolate is merely giving to others the waters of life which we have already received.

Contemplata aliis tradere, said St Thomas Aquinas, and here, as also in other passages of his works, he gives the true definition. It is for us to give to others the treasures we have received, but first we must acquire them for ourselves; this is the meaning of the interior life; and afterwards we can bestow them upon others; this is the work of the apostolate. First comes the loving regard, which is contemplation and a part of the interior life—and then follows the imparting to others of what we have seen and fixed upon our memory.

Ordinary conversation is frequently extraordinarily barren, when mankind is unaware of the presence of God who would give to it the life-giving divine spark. And equally extraordinarily powerful is the word of man when it comes from the lips of an apostle, the nothingness of the creature endued with strength through the vivifying creative breath of the divine spirit.

Of themselves, words are of no account: what use are they to comfort someone who is in great sorrow? will a look of pity

heal that aching wound? The sufferings of the soul are even more disturbing. The priest in the confessional may have kneeling beside him a soul who is overcome by temptation or remorse: he may feel keenly that here is someone struggling wretchedly against an occasion of sin, and resolved not to give way, but so weary and perilously near the abyss and, as it were, hypnotized by it, and tortured by the fear of having given way, perhaps through cowardice or being unprepared, the temptation to scruples thus adding its weight to the initial temptation and increasing the difficulty an hundredfold. To have such a person before him who is resolved to be good and not to give way, who clings to virtue in spite of all he has been through, and to be able to offer, as consolation, only a few feeble human phrases—this is a sad experience.

There is, we must not forget, the grace of the Sacrament *ex opere operato;* it acts, it sustains, consoles, raises up, strengthens and saves.

But if the priest had a more generous impulse, a soul empty of self, in place of these few awkward words which can find no echo in the human breast, his lips would give a message which would penetrate to the heart, would bind up the wounds and supernaturalize them. The words would be few, though expressing much, and of such a character that one or two will be sufficient to work a complete change, and bring joy and sunshine, like heat rays which pass through the broken skin and heal the affected spot.

Such words, as a general rule, can only be found on our knees: souls ask us to give them the vision of God and his Son which we have *seen.* And to do this there is only one possible resource, and that is, in the secret of our souls, by an attentive and ardent contemplation to *see* God and to *see* Jesus Christ, but it must be clearly understood, not with the eyes of the body, or by some extraordinary mystical experience, but by having such a highly developed spirit of faith that the great divine truths become intensely vivid, palpitating and living realities.

Verbally, there is little difference between the two expressions—the agony of Christ and the agonizing Christ, the death on Calvary and the dying Saviour. Yet let us be careful: *agony* is a *thing*, *Christ* agonizing is a *person;* the difference, it may be argued, is almost imperceptible, but often it is very apparent. It is sufficient to hear two preachers on the same subject. What a gulf between the description of Christ dead upon the Cross as history gives it, and the representation of a dying Christ as the Holy Spirit has revealed him to the inner conscience of an apostle!

Only a living soul can give life, and the finest phrases in an exercise, or a printed book, the most elegantly rounded sentences delivered from a lofty pulpit, are of no avail unless the vivifying breath of the Holy Spirit has made them not merely striking and convincing words, but the one word which can change a man's heart, and bring to him both proof of the truth and the grace to submit to it.

Only a deep interior life can make the evidences of religion a triumphant conviction. Holy Scripture tells us that "Stephen, full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and signs among the people,"[1] and if we wish to work wonders we also must be full of grace.

For the true minister and teacher of the invisible realities, appearances are of no importance, but the invisible world is everything, and though this may not be true of every detail of daily life, for we are weakly and sometimes it happens that the real is sacrificed to what is nothing, at any rate, in his appreciation and inner consciousness he realizes this truth: his heart is so detached that he can despise the world and quickly recognize these poor souls who are absorbed by futile amusements when their destiny is to be the daughters of the king.

As regards himself, the many hours spent at the foot of the tabernacle, and his habit of dwelling in spirit in the country of our Lord's earthly life, especially on the outskirts of the

[1] Acts vi 8.

Garden of Gethsemani, or on the slopes of Calvary, as near as possible to the summit, gives him a thirst for the truth. Such a man has every chance that God will give him the power of sympathy and burning zeal which will overcome the most difficult cases.

He may speak little, but each word has substance in it, and even when he keeps silence, his silence is life.

Not all those he comes in contact with will be convinced; but some who are tormented by the restless longings of their own souls—and not all of them—and who are attracted by the face of truth peering through the dividing wall between the visible and invisible, will turn instinctively towards a man who, illumined by the light of Sina, is full of pity for their troubles, and yearns to lead them on the heights whence he has come, and to give to them the alms which the Master has left for them. '" There is only one method of influencing man, that is, by having a great wish to serve him as food."

When the priest is bleeding from the wounds he has received when exercising his ministry, then, and then only, he may dream of a fruitful apostolate, and God will give it him.

" Lord Jesus, have mercy upon the ardent desires of thy workers, have pity on the hearts worn by the sharp point of desire; give to them the secret of understanding suffering, the divine power of succeeding in giving divine consolation in the poor halting words of man, and of creating life with dead syllables. May their grief at having done so little obtain for them the power to accomplish great things, and the bitter sense of their own incompetence be the gage of their strength.

" Thou who art able to give the consolation which is proportionate to the suffering, enlighten in proportion to the need of light, give the help which is needed, have pity upon thy apostles who are weighed down by the knowledge of their own limitations, so that the permanent contrast between their contemptible achievements and their splendid hopes may never discourage them, but be the means of intensifying their zeal and make them every day more fit for their divine task."

Chapter III

THOSE WHO ARE CALLED TO THE APOSTOLATE

I. *There are "not enough" Vocations.*
II. *Every vocation is a call to "sacrifice" and also a promise of the most marvellous "joy."*

I

IN the human organism, every member has its definite function: so in the Church of Jesus Christ, each individual has his own special work to perform.

Can we satisfy ourselves that we are filling the exact position in the mystical Body of Christ that God wishes? Frequently we arrange our lives according to our own tastes and without consulting God. Can we be certain that God is not counting upon making us his apostles, in the true sense of the word, an apostle destined to practise the full apostolate, whether it be the priestly or religious vocation? Many of those who are called refuse to be elected. One day the whisper of the divine invitation was heard; so strong yet so gentle was it, so meek the appeal, that they did not realize its force, and kept the Master waiting, or hid themselves. It is not only those who reply in the affirmative who are called to be priests or religious.

"I believe that God, in order to temper the radiance and beauty of the Catholic priesthood, has covered it with a veil. If people could realize what the priesthood is, there would be too many priests."[1] And these words could be applied also, in due proportion, to the *religious* life.

One day a working man presented himself at a retreat house and said: "I want to do apostolic work, where shall I go?" History has preserved the name of this first recruit who came to Lacordaire; it was Hippolyte Réquédat. It is

[1] *Philosophie du credo*, by Père Gratry, p. 242.

said of him that, when as a young man of twenty he went to a priest and stated that he had not been to confession since his First Communion, his life had been so blameless that he could only accuse himself of having wished that harm might come to the enemies of his country. Every morning he said to our Lady: " Grant me the happiness of being able to recognize my vocation, to know the way by which I can do most good and bring as many people as possible into the Church, and be the most chaste, humble, charitable, patient and active of Christians."

Although these examples are frequent, are there as many as there ought to be ? On all sides vocations are lacking. Whence comes this ? Is it that God no longer makes his appeal ? No: it is because many either do not take the trouble to listen for his voice, or, if they hear it, do not exert themselves to reply. Don Bosco declared that " from my experience of youths, a third of them have the germ of a religious vocation," and he had as many as 3,000 boys and young men in his 150 houses. But this is under specially favourable circumstances, it may be said, yet, even allowing for this, the number is frequently under-estimated. Whose fault is it, parents, teachers, or the boys themselves ?

It is true that to refuse to obey a call to the evangelical counsels or to enter the priesthood, even when it is very clear, does not endanger the soul: even a very insistent invitation is not a command: " Will you do this ?" is not the same as " You must." In the case of a moral certainty that to scorn this appeal would lead to the loss of that soul, there would be sin, but this is unusual.

The great danger of disobeying a vocation is not so much the risk to the *individual* as the loss to the whole *community* caused by this refusal.

You, personally, I admit and suppose, if you remain in the world, will be saved; but what of *all those* with whom you would come in touch had you corresponded with this grace, who will save them ?

Had you been willing, what a gain for these others, and because you turned away, what a misfortune for them! Their means of reaching heaven were through your sacrifice, and you failed them. Now if they attain their end it will be only through a special intervention of God's providence.

Who can estimate the number of souls who are lost, or, at any rate, deprived of some of the grace which is their due, because there is one less apostle in the world; or how many souls would have been gained had another come forward? You were the normal foreordained means of their salvation, and you turned away. God cannot be short of workers, yet, humanly speaking, if there have been a large number of deserters, we need not be surprised if in nineteen hundred years and more the world should be in the state it is now: our Lord so little known, the blood shed on Calvary of so small account, and the sheep in the true sheepfold so few in number.

God said to Ezechiel: "Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: and thou shalt hear the word out of my mouth and shalt tell it them from me. If, when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: thou declare it not to him nor speak to him that he may be converted from his wicked way and live, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand. But if thou give warning to the wicked, and he be not converted from his wickedness and from his evil way: he indeed shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."[1]

But, you say, am I my brother's keeper? In strict justice you are not; the words in Ezechiel are only strictly applicable to those who have the vocation to save souls, so we are not here speaking of strict justice. God is asking you to be one of a number, and you prefer to live in cold isolation. He offers you the privilege of being a light on a pedestal and you have chosen to be a lamp hidden under a bushel. He calls you to be a clock on the summit of a tower and you

[1] Ezech. iii 17, 18, 19.

select to be the brass plate on which it stands. Think of the many souls who would have been warmed by your light, and guided aright by your words. In the tenth century some monks in the plain of Denmark erected a clock tower which bore the words: "*Call* the *wanderers* together," and so many wayfarers gathered round the clock, that now a large city has risen up on this ground, and it is called Copenhagen.

It is the true work of the apostle to assemble the multitude and bring back those who have strayed.

What a divine task it is to save a single soul: a lifetime might be spent over it; and to omit to save a soul is the saddest of omissions.

If only it could be said that by refusing to save one soul we only harmed that individual; but our negligence may affect ten, a hundred or perhaps a thousand souls, for in this case also, and in a more poignant manner than elsewhere, the future result of our actions has to be reckoned. By deliberately refusing to obey the call to the priesthood or cloister—and it must be a serious turning away, for this does not refer to scrupulous souls who think erroneously that they have a vocation—are we not doing a considerable injury to thousands of unknown persons who, all unknown to themselves, were reckoning upon our obeying the vocation to a higher life as the means of raising them out of the dust to a nobler existence?

There are many people who want to do better: they ask anxiously: "Art thou he who should come?" and if the worker should allow himself to be alarmed by the long climb, and should fail them, they will lament that once again they must fix their hopes on others.

II

When our Lord asked his apostles if they were able to taste of his chalice, they answered: "*We are able.*" And only the grace of God can give these valiant souls who yearn

to save others, the courage to leave their sheltered corner and throw themselves resolutely into the breach.

Do we know what *to depart* means? To be dragged away from all we love, to leave everything: places and persons who are dear to us, and a crowd of things, often unimportant in themselves, but which we loved, which could hold us back, wind themselves round us, and impose on us their captivating though useless existence—to leave all this forever. To leave this world is to quit the paternal roof to which we are bound by a hundred links. Can we imagine the bitterness of such a separation? To wander for the last time along the garden paths where, as tiny children, we used to play, knew every rock and stone, and before leaving to gather a flower to be pressed in a book together with a precious photograph, a rose maybe from a bush which our beloved mother planted. To cast a parting glance over the bedroom with its cot still in its familiar corner, the room where death first visited the house, and to bid good-bye to our own room, so full of memories, where we loved to read and work and pray, how many prayers, at the bedside before the large crucifix given to us by some relative; to note for the last time the discreet little pencil-marks on the dining-room door which showed the height we attained at different ages: it was long ago, at such and such an age, that the first thought of going off came to us. At times like these above all others, the smallest thing is a relic.

We say truly "the smallest thing," and a soul called to the religious life, writing on the eve of her departure, remarks: "Mere trifles cling to me: my room arranged as I like it, my bed facing the window and the holy water stoup beside it, the photograph on my table: it costs me dearly to break with them all, and *yet I must*."

A Little Sister of the Poor, a valiant soul, was asked one day: "What did you bring away with you when you left home?" The answer was: "Twelve pocket-handkerchiefs so that I could have my cry out."

Nor must we think that to yield to these natural emotions denotes lack of self-control. St Teresa herself, when speaking of her departure to the convent at the age of twenty, declares that: "When I crossed the threshold of my father's house for the last time, I was so upset that I do not think the hour of death can bring me more acute suffering."

The unfortunate individual who speaks insultingly to a priest or nun, never suspects the wonderful power of love, for God and for himself, which was needed to induce this soul to leave his home and take up a life of renunciation and apostolic labours.

The grief of these departures cannot be explained solely by the separations involved. There is another more subtle and less brutal form of suffering which should be mentioned. The new life that lies before this soul is a mystery: she knows what she has left behind, but of the details and content of this which lies before her she knows nothing. She knows sufficient of what it involves to make her choice of this life a wise one, she is in sufficient ignorance to make her total abandonment in God's hands a meritorious act. Many persons would prefer to have all that God demands of them now, and in the future, laid out before them. But it is God's wish that we should accept all these opportunities for self-denial which are unknown to us, and only see in part what is in store, so that we should recognize his generosity and goodness and show our trust in him. How admirable are the dispensations of divine Providence! For while he will not greatly diminish the bitterness of the sacrifice in order that the soul may enjoy the full merits of her action, yet he hides from her all that it entails lest her imagination should take fright, and her frail nature recoil from the prospect.

There is nothing more delicate than the divine manner of drawing a soul, what might be termed the luminous obscurity of the divine appeal.

Let us picture the divine Master with the apostles gathered round him: whether he is by the lake-side where the fishermen

are mending their nets, or close to the market where Matthew is receiving the customs, he addresses them all in the same words: "Come ye after me." Where were they to go, whither would they follow him? Our Lord does not say, he merely calls them: "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men."[1] No explanations, no illuminating hints as to the future.

No one can say that such an appeal was easy to follow; it was so obscure because no one knew what it meant.

When Abram is called by the Most High God, he is told to "go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.[2] God reserves it to himself to add little by little the details which are required.

To St Joseph the carpenter, the command is: "Arise, and take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee."[3] For how long? He was to stay there: "until I shall tell thee." The point was that they were to set off, but the length of the journey and the duration of their sojourn in that country was not revealed.

St Joan of Arc was told to "Go, go, daughter of Christ." But what she was to do exactly she was not told. She knew that she had to set off and find Charles the Dauphin, but what was to follow she could not tell. Of Tourelles, Rheims, Compiègne and Rouen, at the moment, the voices were silent.

And in our own case: each time that God calls us to rise higher we feel that he is calling us, but usually we know not whither he is leading us: and our future inspirations depend upon the fidelity with which we have obeyed his continued appeals.

The poet Tennyson recounts how, when he was a boy, before he could read, he used to wander for hours on end along the seashore, listening to the murmur of the waves. "I

[1] St Matt. iv 19. [2] Gen. xii 1.
[3] St Matt. ii 13.

seemed to hear a voice," he said, "speaking in the wind," and the voice murmured: "*Far away, far away*"—words which had always an extraordinary fascination for him.

Each vocation begins in a similar manner: there is the voice calling through the wind which the soul hears, that insinuates into the heart an inexpressible longing for an unknown country "far away." And moreover, if this unknown land remains lost in the far distance, she feels no shadow of doubt that everything will have to be sacrificed in order to reach it. The appeal is quite explicit: rise, go out and come near. If for a second the soul should turn away, these words will remind her of her duty and she will return. She does not know exactly whither she has to go, but she does know quite clearly that she is bound to set off.

Beware of imagining that this longing for another country comes from a blasé distaste for this world.

The tales of monasteries where broken hearts find a refuge no longer hold credence except in stories, or in light operas and plays. In reality there are very few persons who wait until they have been disillusioned by this world before entering the cloister: the greater number, even before they have tried it, have a merry contempt of this life, not because something suddenly failed them, but because, being naturally exacting, they instinctively aspired to what was higher and felt they were born to *greater things:* and this is the truth.

When someone enters the priesthood or cloister late in life, people say: "They knew too well the meaning of life," and we have seen what this reproach implies. If the individual goes off in the fulness of youth, then: "He doesn't know what life is." If he was ignorant of this life, he knew God and that was sufficient. If he did not know the world, he knew that divine Love had been nailed to the Cross: is it necessary to ask if he knows anything else? He will not be able, certainly, to foretell all the difficulties which the Cross involves; God permits this because of his human weakness

Even to the most valiant, he does not make everything plain; even to St Peter he only revealed in ambiguous terms the future that was in store for him: " Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now: but thou shalt follow hereafter,"[1] and the details which our Lord adds in no sense explain the mystery. " When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not."[2] That is sufficient, no more. God permits his disciple to know there will be suffering: " Can you drink of the chalice that I drink of, or be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?"[3] There is sufficient to make the parting very sorrowful, but our Lord permits that the face on the Cross should shine upon us and then what a happiness to go!

III

Here is a strange anomaly: God is so good to us, that to leave this life costs less than to remain behind.

" I must go to the King," said St Joan of Arc, and we echo her statement.

In the case of a *true* vocation, such as we are considering, the soul loyally recognizes that God demands of her to break with the world and depart; a departure which, as has been clearly said, will be costly. Can we imagine that to remain behind is not also painful when the soul is made for higher things? God has his methods of revenge: it is where souls have given up most that the greatest happiness is to be found. But when anyone has let God appeal in vain, then sadness invades the soul. The Gospel tells us that the young man who so candidly questioned the Master as to the conditions of the perfect life, and found the prospect of it too hard, went away *sadly*.

But, on the other hand, with what joys does not our Lord

[1] St John xiii 36. [2] *Ibid.* xxi 18. [3] St Mark x 38.

reward those who have left all to follow him and have placed their feet in the tracks of his footsteps! If we mention only the purely apostolic vocation, what happiness it is to spread the word of God, to give spiritual and temporal alms, and to unite a soul to our Lord or bring it back into God's favour; to open the gates of heaven to the dying—or the more austere but very real joys of being ill-treated for the name of Jesus Christ, exiled and injured like him—and, who knows? of being, perhaps, put to death for the faith.

There is a whole series of supernatural joys of which the world knows nothing, and which require the tongue of a saint to make them known.

If we could realize that we are the depositaries of these divine riches, that to us are entrusted invisible powers that alone will succeed in saving the world: that one word, one movement of the hand can be the means of bringing love to mankind, and that by listening to this word and accepting this outstretched hand, another soul may be restored to life, or given fresh life, be reborn or revive; the prospect of these living sepulchres, in which sin has enclosed so many men and women, would fill us with compassion, like our Lord at the tomb of Lazarus. Would we could realize that we are the instruments chosen by God to work these marvels, that all unknown to themselves, these wanderers are looking for a messenger from on high, for a Messiah, and that we are these messengers sent by God. But like the Master, we shall have to drink of the chalice before the work of the redemption can operate, and an immense weight of salvation will be the reward of the smallest sacrifice—what a marvellous recompense!

The world holds no joys that can be compared to the joys of the apostolic vocation.

We have the happiness of possessing the truth. When God desires to bestow upon one of his creatures the greatest of graces, he breathes upon the pupils of his eyes and says: "*Ephpheta*, be opened," and immediately the film drops from

the eyes, and a new vision is given to him. The world now appears to him to be in need, like the wounded man that appealed to the Samaritan for help. Then comes the happiness of spreading the truth, for not only does the sight have a fresh focus, but the heart is changed. It seems as if, up to this moment, he had never known what it was to love, and now it is made plain; and this love feels itself able to carry into effect the most stupendous schemes.

Alas, how comes it these supernaturalized intelligences are so rare: on all sides there are appeals for workers to undertake this divine apostolate, and there are so few.

" Lord, open the eyes of those many souls who love, who are looking for the truth; open their eyes and make them compassionate workers who, after they have discovered the great kingdom of souls waiting to be assisted, will resolve to leave their own corner of the field and gather in the sheaves of corn which are waiting to be garnered."

You who are reading this book, listen to the voice within your soul.

Perhaps you have never come to any definite decision as to your future, and you have now to think of it.

If this is so, the present moment is of sovereign interest for you, and should your heart beat more quickly at this suggestion, it is possible that it is a sign of the passage of our divine Master, who, at this very time, is bidding you rise to a higher life.

BOOK II

THE APOSTOLATE OF PRAYER

Chapter IV

WHAT IT MEANS, ITS CONDITION AND ITS FRUITS

I. *How it is quite possible and even necessary to become an apostle by prayer.*
II. *To do this, our prayers must be based on the recognition of our common union with Jesus Christ.*
III. *The smallest prayer can move the world, while in no way modifying God's plan.*

I

NO apostolic worker, whether his sphere of action be limited to certain individuals, or extend to embrace a large crowd, however widespread and durable it may be, can pretend to a universal influence.

St Francis Xavier evangelized numberless people, the coast of Paravers, the Malabar coast, Singapore, Japan, and a dozen other different countries: what do they represent on a map of the world? He is reported to have baptized a hundred thousand Christians; but the one empire of China, the promised land on which, at the age of forty-three, his dying eyes were fixed, has four hundred times this number of inhabitants.

Our apostolic zeal, however splendid it may be, is, of necessity, limited; how fortunate it is that its auxiliary, the apostolate of prayer, has no restrictions.

Exterior works of zeal are of their nature limited, but,

happily, they can be supplemented by the apostolate of prayer, which knows no boundaries to its actions. For this reason every truly zealous worker finds the great need of frequent prayer, in the first place to find nourishment for his own words and actions, and, secondly, as a means of evangelizing the vast field of action that lies beyond his grasp.

There are instances where works of charity are either quite impossible or, from urgent reasons of circumstances, health or conflicting duties, are greatly reduced.

Yet souls full of apostolic zeal are to be found: the number of persons in a state of spiritual destitution appeals to our sense of compassion, and we long to throw the salvage rope which will save them from falling into the abyss. But how is it to be done? What if the cord is too short and too weak to save these hundreds?

Have we remembered to pray for them?

With prayer we can do all things.

Père Gratry was asked to write a preface for a book, the only one of all those that had appeared during the nineteenth century which he would have wished to have written—*The Apostleship of Prayer*, by Père Ramière, S.J. He wrote: "The world is going downhill; it will improve *when* we wish —that is to say, when we are willing to pray for it." What an absurd statement! No, it is quite true. The end of man is eternal happiness: and rightly this supernatural destiny is not reserved for a chosen few. To Calvin is to be credited the horrible saying: "The world is divided into two camps: those whom God wishes to save, and those whom he equally certainly wishes to damn."

If we think of *God* the Father, the idea that he, by an eternal decree, could condemn man to hell, without any possibility of his escaping, is repugnant to our sense of the divine goodness.

If we turn to *Jesus Christ*, did he not die for the whole world? What of the Jansenist crucifix with the vertical arms? He died on the Cross with his arms widespread, and whoever

willingly throws himself between those arms will feel them close around him, like St Francis of Assisi in the well-known picture by Murillo.

Lastly, there is the *Church;* has not our Saviour said: "Go ye and teach all nations"? This is her sole mission which has been confided to her and no one by right should escape her: the grace of salvation is within reach of all men. Unfortunately, although we theoretically allow the truth of this fact, in *practice* and reality, how many souls there are at the present moment who are outside the way of salvation! And who would venture to affirm that at the moment of death every individual is in the requisite condition to pass into the presence of God: who dares say that hell is empty, or, at any rate, that no fresh person will go there?

Therefore does not the divine will that *all* men should be saved appear absurdly satirical; the tragic attempt of our Lord to redeem the world, a dismal failure; and the command to bring the sheep away from the dangers of wolves into the sheepfold, an absurd impossibility?

The answer is not difficult. God desires to save *all* men: but he does not wish to save us *without our help*. The work of salvation is a large, open-hearted co-operative enterprise, world-wide in its range, which includes all those who are concerned in an undertaking that has both an individual and a general interest.

There are people who will complain that this is merely a theological way of looking at things, and has no bearing upon the facts of daily life; but this is not true. This statement will go far in solving our individual perplexities. We will explain it.

Although we were created without our consent, we cannot be saved without our co-operation.

God will not save us without our own assistance, and this signifies, in the first place, our individual concurrence and the consent of our will. Nothing is more alarming than the thought that we, creatures of nought, can oppose our formal,

though of necessity temporary veto to the commands of God's almighty will.

And from this it follows that we can act upon the wills of others to incline them in a given direction, and this should never be forgotten. Yet it is also true, that if the will of this other person persists in its refusal, nothing can alter it. Therefore, although our prayer can never fail, provided it fulfils certain conditions, yet it is not necessarily infallible for him for whom it is offered, as will be seen. We have learned that God will not save us in spite of ourselves; this implies that God will save every man through the co-operation of his fellow-men: the whole community has its part to play in the sanctification of its individual members.

How is this? Does God allow the sanctification and salvation of souls to depend upon whether the rest of the human race or certain members of it lend their assistance or not?

Yes, up to a certain undefinable, but indispensable point, this is true.

St Paul will help us to solve the mystery of this divine dispensation: he writes to Timothy in these words: "I desire therefore, first of all, that supplication, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men. . . . For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."[1]

Here we find two thoughts linked together, prayer and salvation, prayer for all and the salvation of everyone. It is, therefore, quite clear that it is God's will that man shall not be saved without the free co-operation of each one of us, since we are individually asked to be so good as to further the designs of Providence by our prayers.

It is not to be doubted for one moment that God has not given to all men sufficient grace to save their souls, it would be a mockery of his powers to deny this.

But how many there are who fail him! How many resist

[1] 1 Tim. ii 1, 3, 4.

grace! Grace in itself was all-sufficient, but freewill refused to utilize it. Ought we to blame God for his refusal to show mercy, when it is really the soul that has refused to correspond with that grace?

The soul will be more ready to make use of the graces she has received, if she has already been put into a good humour by an act of charity or generosity: this is where our prayers come in.

It is to these acts of charity that the apostle is inviting us when he says: "Pray one for another, that you may be saved,"[1] as if he wished to tell us that the accomplishment of this merciful desire of our Lord does not depend solely upon the free co-operation of those he is seeking to save, but also on the zeal, the prayers and efforts of all those who are already on the right way and whom God calls to bring back their brethren.

People complain because the world is pagan; but is it not in part the fault of us Christians? They say it is going from bad to worse, but it will recover when we are willing to exert ourselves and pray for it; prayer is one of the most successful methods of conversion. It rests with us to agree to pass beyond the limited horizon of our own personal interests, large or small, and to let the spiritual welfare of mankind become the subject-matter of our prayers. The work of saving the world does not rest upon one person, although it is true that Christ redeemed the world alone, but there is also a co-operative work of redemption, which includes not only our Lord the Head, the Master, Mary's Son, but also all Christians in a state of grace, the members of his Body.

Each one of us is a part of the Christian community, a fragment of the mystical Body, and as members of Christ it is our duty to throw into the balance of the divine scales the weight of our individual good influence, an obligation which may have varying forms, but is incumbent upon all. If all men are not called upon to depart to far-off countries and

[1] St James v 16.

evangelize the heathen, they are asked, at any rate, to concern themselves with the eternal salvation of Christ's members, wherever they may be, and to intercede that in God's good time they may attain to their full stature. This is a work which no one can say is beyond his powers; he will not venture to own that as he takes no interest in this mystical Body of Christ upon earth of which he is part, so he will not trouble himself about those who are, or might become, his members.

No one has a right to shut himself up in " a splendid isolation," a sort of sacred egoism. In political life it has been proved to be an error, here it is a crime.

The most unimportant person can and ought to co-operate in this common work of the salvation of the world.

A young girl of twenty who fully understood the meaning of prayer, wrote: " My heart beats in unison with the needs of humanity." And again: " My desires are too vast, I would like to save the whole world. God, from morning to evening, from night to morning, it is thee whom I seek, whom I love and desire to possess for all the souls on earth and throughout the ages."

Another pious soul remarked: " I never receive an inspiration nor a grace without wanting to share it with the whole world."

It is quite allowable for us to choose such and such a soul out of the whole world, and make it our duty to pray for her.

In the first place we must differentiate between the living and the dead.

All of us have our own dead for whom we are responsible, and we must never forget them. From the depths of purgatory, where they are powerless to help themselves, they are counting upon our aid. We read on a tombstone, " who passed away on ——." Does this mean that for four or six years or more this soul has been waiting for our compassionate help to lift it out of the land of waiting, and we have done nothing? It is like the soldier with the army of occupation,

who never receives a letter or a parcel: we see help coming to our companions, but there is nothing for us. Yet the dead are living, they are only on the other side of the barrier: *Miseremini mihi saltem vos amici mei.*

We have also, in addition to our dead, our living: all those who have been good to us to whom our gratitude is due; and all those whom we have injured and to whom we owe a debt of justice.

Then there are those whom we love, our hearts would be very narrow if we neglected them, but by specifying the intentions of our prayers we are not limiting their number; because we remember certain people it does not imply that we are forgetting others. It has been said already that we must not only pray for ourselves, we must pray for our relatives, and not only for them, but for all those whom our Lord calls his own, that is, all those who are chosen to live in him.

" I have learned the habit," writes a university student, " when I am taking my daily quarter of an hour's tram ride, of saying an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* for each of those who are with me in the car. When I am kept waiting at the crowded shops, at the mid-morning recreation, in my walks along the roads, it is quite easy and a good plan to say some prayers, a *Gloria in Excelsis* for this person, a *Salve Regina* for that, and a *Veni Creator* for another, and countless *Hail Marys*.

" In this way we can make up for the forgetfulness and other deficiencies of thirty or forty indifferent people, or of thirty or forty sinners, and by our diligent application we can swell the number of prayers which each day are borne to the feet of almighty God."

These words are taken from the magazine of the Catholic University Professors. The spirit underlying this practice is even more important. This Christian who really prays as a Catholic should pray, who takes an interest in the eternal salvation of the world and has a true comprehension of the *apostolic* spirit, is fully alive to the needs of these souls and

his own power of coming to their assistance. He is ready, by his prayers and his faith, to extend his charity to these persons about whom he knows but one thing, and that is, that one of the Hail Marys he repeats can give them life or preserve it, because he and they are grafted upon the same branch, which is Jesus Christ.

How many hearts there are who are yearning for someone on whom to bestow their affection and do not know on whom to lavish it: here is a grand means of using their surplus affections. It is true that this is an object that is invisible, but is it not in the invisible world that all the faithful will be joined together in Christ, the central focus of our souls, and where the highest form of love will be found ?

II

It is quite certain that the world cannot be saved and made holy except by grace, and grace is obtained pre-eminently by prayer.

But this powerful instrument does not derive its force from the fact that it comes from the stammering speech of man, or because it was evolved in the brain of this creature made from the dust, but because these words and thoughts are associated with the infinite adoration, infinite praise, and infinite act of thanksgiving and reparation, of One whose prayer was greater than any human prayer, the " only religious," as Monsieur Olier used to say—*our Lord Jesus Christ*.

He is the one mediator, and without him there is no possibility of salvation. Therefore anything that is not linked on to our Lord—and prayer among the number—cannot have either a sanctifying or saving virtue. On the contrary, from the fact that we are one with Jesus Christ and joined to him, our poor words when they rise up to God become the words which Christ has spoken, our gestures towards the Most High are the gestures of our Lord.

When the blessing of God descends upon humanity on its knees, in adoration or intercession, it falls also upon Christ, who alone can offer to his Father an infinite adoration and supplication, but by falling on Christ it also reaches every one of the members who are one with him. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."[1] These words are written by St Paul in the beginning of his Epistle to the Ephesians.

In point of fact, when we pray our prayer is our own, aided by grace, but the value of the prayer comes from Jesus Christ "The voice indeed is the voice of Jacob; but the hands are the hands of Esau,"[2] murmured Isaac, and God can use these same words when he judges of human prayers: we must draw a distinction between what is only apparent and what is real.

There is only one person in the world who can give God the glory he merits, and that is he in whom God is well pleased. But since we are one with this great Being, the Father is able to be well pleased with us also. Although he sees us, his eyes are fixed on his Son; our prayers, by their passing through the prayers of Jesus, become impregnated with the divine Spirit, and when they reach the throne of God, the Father recognizes the voice of his well-beloved Son, the voice, if we may so express it, of his own blood.

The hands are the rough horny hands of Esau, but the voice is that of Jacob, his best-beloved son. It is for this reason that the Church addresses all the prayers she offers to God the Father through Jesus Christ. The unvarying termination of all the liturgical prayers is a constant reminder of the communion of saints and of our life in Christ; it recalls to our minds the splendid and manifold union of Christ and all his members into one body, a bond of union with numberless component parts, that yet is extraordinarily united. If we could realize more fully the fact of the union of our prayers—

[1] Eph. i 3. [2] Gen. xxvii 22.

when they are made as God wishes—with the prayer of our Saviour Jesus Christ, it would be no longer possible, as is sometimes done, to doubt the sovereign efficacy of prayer.

We will leave on one side all those who do not pray aright, or who ask for things of no importance: it is extraordinary that they should be surprised that their petitions are not heard. But these others, those who pray as Christians should, let them be on their guard to see that their prayers are wholeheartedly Christian.

Our Lord tells us "whatsoever you shall ask the Father *in my name*, that will I do."[1] To pray to the Father in his name, by relying on his merits and offering them to the Father—this is the true Christian method of prayer. Prayer as thus understood is at one and the same time offered by man and rendered efficacious by God. Every act of prayer brings, if we may venture to use the expression, a fresh element into the mysterious relations between Christ the High Priest and God the Father, to the intimate life of God.

The liturgy of the Mass gives the correct method of making our offerings to almighty God. They must be made in union with our Lord considered as one head and one mediator: *by him*, *with him* and *in him*.

By him who is able to give to our souls the power of raising themselves up to God provided the Holy Spirit is in us, the spirit of Jesus, whereby alone we can articulate the children's cry: "*Abba Pater*."

With him. "Without me ye are nothing," said our Lord, and this is true always, and especially in this instance. With him nothing is impossible; an atom of real faith united with Jesus Christ can raise mountains.

In him. St Cyprian in his treatise on the prayer of the three children in the fiery furnace: "Then these three as with *one mouth* praised and glorified God,"[2] remarks that "nevertheless, Jesus Christ had not yet come to earth to teach

[1] St John xiv 13. [2] Dan. iii. 51.

men how to pray." And since our Lord has spoken, the Church has given us an explanation of the dogma.

It is because every soul, by his union with the divine Mediator, ought, when he prays, to think of himself as being in the centre of the universe: every movement of his lips, if he is sincere, each heart-beat of love is the motive power, to change destinies, give new energy to weary minds, render life and movement to those who are paralyzed, and restore to life those who have been dead for four days.

At first sight there seems small connection between those arms outstretched on the Cross and these victories, between those swollen lips and the life that is restored, and a beating heart a hundred leagues away and another heart which has been inert for years past and now begins to beat once more.

What connection can there be? It is at the very moment when man declares himself to be entirely dependent, and a miserable, needy creature, when he is on his knees like the beggar in the Gospel, that God comes to his aid and allows him to rely on his decisions: the world is saved by those who are on their knees.

St Francis Xavier wrote to St Ignatius that it was the prayers of Europe that had converted Asia: he baptized the people, but grace came from Coimbra and Rome. And that officer, in the army on the Rhine, after the Revolution, owed his conversion to the prayers of his mother. "Pray, children," she said to the little ones who had been left behind in her charge, "pray for Joseph that he may realize his vocation." This captain was called later Father Varin, the well-known Jesuit.

There was once a young priest whose life was not very edifying: one day a monk in his monastery heard the voice of God calling to him and saying: "My son, pray for the Abbé Pebrac." He had never heard this name before, but God did not ask whether he knew this man, but told him to help him by his prayers. The Abbé de Pebrac was twenty-two years old, and his real name was Monsieur Olier.

An unfortunate man was condemned to death for an evil life. A little girl of seven heard people talking about him, and she was so upset by the thought that he would appear unrepentant before God that she started a campaign of prayers, and naïvely asked for a sign that they had been heard. On the day when the criminal was to be hung, she looked at the evening paper and read that before his death the unfortunate man, who up to that moment had remained obstinately impenitent, had kissed the crucifix three times. The child was little Therèse of the Child Jesus, and this was God's answer to her prayer.

The most successful apostolic workers, those whose mission it is to throw the good seed to the four winds, know the debt they owe to those who pray.

Bossuet remarked: "Frequently the inspirations of those who teach come from the prayers of those who are listening to them."

An appointment is vacant, and if no one comes forward to fill it, then the souls of the faithful will lose the graces which should be theirs: then a humble prayer reaches God's throne, and the means are found of supplying what was required.

There is the well-known story of the Brothers of the Convent of Witzburg and the little girl. One day they set off as usual to preach to the people, but a flood barred their way: then they found a boat, but it had no oars, and on the farther side was the crowd waiting to hear the word of God Then a little girl of eight came running down the hillside with an oar over her shoulder, and carried them across the flood, and disappeared. This story comes from the Lives of the Dominican Fathers of the thirteenth century, and the same tales will be recounted in heaven when the chronicles of the different religious orders are read, the history of all centuries is revealed. We shall then see how the most striking apostolic successes have been due to the prayers of some unknown humble soul.

Whenever the supernatural light is most radiant and the

greatest results have been obtained, it is certain that a powerful volume of prayers has been thrown into the brazier. By the time that the flames have begun to act upon the ore, the man who threw it into the crucible will have disappeared, or, perhaps, his figure may be seen outlined against the flaming sky, and those who take out the gold, purified of its dross, will give not a thought to the humble workman who has vanished into the night; yet at one moment in the proceedings everything depended on him.

III

If we study the dramatic phases of the protracted struggle between Jacob and the angel, we might easily get a false impression of what prayer means. Here we have man's prayer in opposition to what appears to be God's will. Certain writers speak as if our prayers should be very insistent and imperative, almost dictatorial if they expect to be heard; some sentences in pious books describe God in the same terms as if he were a man.

" Do violence to God!" cried that well-known preacher, the holy man of Tours, Monsieur l'Abbé Dupont, and so famed was he for his power of prayer that one day he received a letter addressed to " M. Dupont, the Prayer-Doctor —he who cures men—Tours, France."

Hello said of him: " He could not bear the careful way in which most people prayed. He wanted them to pray to God as to a man whom one held to his promise and would not allow him to avoid it. ' Make no conditions to your petitions and let them be quite unreasonable,' he said. ' But this may not be God's will?' If you think this you will never get what you want: by your reasoning you are endeavouring to dispense God from granting your prayer: you are hindering him."

In the book of Exodus there are one or two expressions which at first sight appear to be somewhat disconcerting. The

children of Israel, in Moses' absence, had set up a golden calf and worshipped it, and God was very angry. Moses interposed, and God the sovereign Lord became, as it were, a suppliant. "Let me alone that my wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them." Then Moses spoke of Abraham, Isaac and Israel and God's promises to them. "And the Lord was appeased from doing the evil which he had spoken against his people."[1]

And all through the Old Testament there are similar incidents. When Abraham pleaded for the city of Sodom, God entered into a bargain with him to spare the city if possible.

Moses again obtained the victory of the Amalekites by pleading with God with upraised arms: and when fire came down from heaven to consume the rebellious people, Aaron, by his prayers, arrested their passage. When Josue, in order to complete his victory, made a last appeal to God and asked that the sun and moon should stand still, Holy Scripture tells us that "There was not before nor after so long a day, the Lord obeying the voice of a man."[2] Later still there was Eli and Eliseus and many others.

These incidents and metaphors must not blind us to the underlying theological truth.

The efficacious power of prayer is not to be attributed to its ability to modify God's designs; it cannot modify them. It is impossible to imagine that God, through our supplications, should become, as it were, our subordinate, that he should give up his own will and let his decisions be thwarted and overthrown, and retract his desires so as to adopt ours; it is as if we were to think of God as a human being with a finite mind, and forget his sovereign domain, which would be a very serious and gross mistake. The human language which we use when speaking of almighty God is necessarily inadequate, and we should always try to be as precise as possible.

[1] Exod. xxxii 10, 14. [2] Josue x 14.

Our prayers are eternally present to God, and they incline him eternally to determine his one immutable act in the direction which is in accordance with the divine order decreed by his Providence.

In other words: God fixes beforehand the effects which should be produced, but they are naturally dependent upon the causes which govern them, and among these causes we must take into consideration our actions and prayer in the first place. To ask God that such and such an event may come to pass, is not to expect him to divert his fixed designs in an opposite direction, but to do our part in fulfilling our share in the work which corresponds with the pre-ordained dispensations of divine Providence. We do not pray in order to change God's will, but that certain things may be altered in accordance with the designs of God.

In this way we admit the play of secondary causes under the action of the first cause, and it is clearly seen that this in no way lessens the efficacy of prayer. God, from all eternity, counts upon my action at the present time; but that does not detract from its actual value at this moment: God has foreseen it for all time, it was part of his designs.

Pascal said: "Why did God start prayer? It was to communicate to his creatures the dignity of causation.

"But in order to reserve the first place for himself, he only gave the gift of prayer to those who were pleasing to him."[1]

[1] Pascal, *Pensées*, No. 513.

CHAPTER V

THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

I. *Its justification.*
II. *Its power of continuation.*

I

CERTAIN people realize so strongly the apostolic power of prayer, that they devote themselves, not for a space of time, but for all the rest of their lives, not as isolated individuals, but compact groups, to act as intercessors before God.

" For he created all things that they might be, and he made the nations of the earth for health."[1]

Prayer is to be the one great lever: in all other cases we are obliged to work through secondary causes: here we attain the first cause.

Every river comes from a source, and the source is fed by the glaciers in the high mountains among the ever accumulating eternal snows.

Our restless century cannot grasp the notion of these many persons joined together in prayer for the salvation of the world. People are quite pleased to be always moving about and to have visible success. As Father Faber remarked: " Nowadays men only believe what they see." We no longer place our confidence, or very little of it, in invisible forces, the principal of which is prayer.

When we speak of the apostolate, our thoughts at once turn, and naturally, to the active apostolate, and unless we are careful they will remain there.

Whenever anyone is very busy with good works and burning with zeal, everyone says that he is a true apostle, which may be true provided that in addition to this external activity

[1] Wisdom i 14.

there is the inner spirit. But when a young man or a young girl of twenty shut themselves up behind a grille or in a cell, immediately there is an outcry, and the most indulgent criticism is the saying: "Why on earth did they take up this *useless* kind of life when there is so much to be done outside?"

How can these convents and monasteries which are consecrated to the contemplative life be termed straight away useless? In the earliest ages of Christendom, virgins and hermits were to be seen who vowed themselves to a life of chastity, prayer and mortification. There are three forms of religious life, the contemplative, the active and the mixed—half contemplative and half active—and the Church has never permitted any discredit to be thrown on the first to the advantage of the other two. If we prefer not to consult ancient writings, there are the two severe encyclical letters written by Pope Leo XIII, condemning the American exclusive adoption of active works.

The Church has done more; she has always encouraged, praised and bestowed her favour upon the contemplative life, as may be seen in the books of the Foundations of the Carthusians, the Carmelites and others. If these souls whose lives are vowed principally and almost exclusively to adoration and praise were to disappear, the Church would be deprived of her most beautiful jewels.

The body of the faithful seldom take up the work which will be our sole occupation in heaven, the contemplation of God. Therefore, the Church desires that on earth there shall be some of her chosen children who give themselves up to this great undertaking which will be the special function of the elect.

Further, when God created the world he wished that the earth should send up to him a daily offering of praise, thanksgiving and love. But where is to be found a sufficient contingent to make this offering and give the world a motive for existence, where find these offerings of thanksgiving and love?

Men forget all about these duties, or at best are very negligent. It is necessary that there shall be faithful souls who will remember this most essential work and compensate for these negligences and omissions: and who can do this better than the contemplative orders! There are positive offences against God in addition to these omissions, thoughts, desires, words, actions, blasphemies, impurities, scandals and secret sins. Who can make reparation for all of these? The world looks askance at the idea of doing penance and forgets to practise it. Who is there who will pray and make expiation for the sin-laden world? Sodom and Gomorrha were very wicked, and God demanded that there should be some just persons who should stand surety for Sodom. And he was not over-exacting in his demands; at first he asked for a hundred just men, but they were not to be found: then he reduced the figure to fifty, and there was not this number. He lessened it again to twenty, then to ten, and still it was too many. He would have saved Sodom and Gomorrha if he had been able to find ten just persons: but the city was more insolent than before. These ten good men or women are needed as much now as then, or the world will be consumed by fire: and these ten just or good persons will be found most surely among our Carmelites, Poor Clares, Carthusians, Reparatrices and Priests and Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration, whose aim is to throw the weight of their life of prayer into the scales of divine justice.

At the outbreak of the Revolution in France, there were eleven or twelve thousand contemplative monks and nuns. "When they were asked to state the object of their respective communities, they replied with humble yet dignified simplicity: 'To *pray* to *God*.' While the crowd outside was never still, they were quietly praying: when the voices of impiety made themselves heard more and more they continued their prayers.

"They prayed in choir, they prayed in their cells, they prayed by the words of their mouths, by the sacrifice of their

own wills, by their acts of mortification, by their bodies reduced to servitude, and by the renunciation of all their earthly affections. Although their bodies were still in their cells, yet in spirit they were transported into the infinite, though immolated, they were radiant, and in the upward flight of their spirits they uplifted the world, and face to face with God they had the wonderful power of being able to make atonement for and wipe out the sins of humanity."[1]

If the Carthusians—to mention them only—entered the cloister solely in order to save their own souls, there would be some truth in the reproach of selfishness which is launched against them.

Yet it would be quite within their rights and a sufficient motive for their resolve. Usually zeal is at the bottom of most contemplative vocations. And if a more personal consideration should determine the choice of certain individuals or certain religious congregations, yet the gift of self to this life of prayer and mortification of necessity strengthens the apostolic idea, which quickly gets the upper hand.

The contemplative soul retires into solitude not in order that the world shall leave him in peace, but that the world through him may obtain peace.

It is not a selfish step then but an eminently social work.

Then there is their mission as *protectors* of the world. Hello, with his customary bluntness, declared that "the contemplative orders are quite useless." So are the lightning-conductors on our house roof. In reality, the day when there are no more lightning-conductors in existence, will the world be still existing? When a terrible fire at Catania threatened not to leave one stone upon another, every possible human device was brought into action to extinguish it. But the flames triumphed over human efforts. Then people remembered the virgin of Sicily, St Agatha, who,

[1] *Histoire religieuse de la revolution francaise*, by De la Gorce, i, pp. 79-80.

when she died, bequeathed her veil to the city. Immediately it was sent for, it was held out to the flames, and they were overpowered and quenched.

The contemplative orders not only protect, they also *provide* for others.

" Your prayers," said St Teresa to her daughters, " should be directed towards the spiritual good of souls. It seems to me that by employing us all to pray for the defenders of the Church, for the preachers and the learned who are her guardians, we shall be succouring our adorable master."[1]

Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus knew this when she said: " I wish to spend my time in heaven in doing good to those on earth." She was speaking of heaven above, but it was true also of Carmel, her heaven on earth.

The higher a soul rises in mystic contemplation the more readily she understands the needs of souls. She never leaves God, but her thought of God becomes larger, deeper and more comprehensive. Her love for our Lord is an affection which cannot separate Christ from his members. Although she is happy in her love, with all the transports that this sad happiness includes, yet she suffers still more because the one object of her love is not better loved. The more she realizes that God is all, the more grieved she is to see the world paying so little attention to him or forgetting him. And, consequently, she is always supplicating for the world.

It is gross ignorance to think of the contemplative life as a species of refined Buddhism, that is indifferent to the poor and the rest of humanity, and is entirely absorbed in a selfish consideration of the world to come.

II

There are many people who, although they do not deny the *utility* of the contemplative life, yet from motives of *expediency*, seeing the difficulties of the moment and the necessity

[1] *The Way of Perfection*, xx.

of combating resolutely the enemies of the Church, are inclined to think, though they will not always own it, that it is wiser to choose the active than the contemplative life. Is not the person who shuts himself away in a cell with his books, his discipline and his crucifix, a deserter when workers are needed for catechism classes, to teach in the schools and take care of the sick ?

It is true that the need of active workers is extremely urgent; masters and mistresses are needed in the schools, on all sides new enterprises are being started or should be set going, and there is no one to organize them. But everyone has not necessarily an aptitude for the active life: a man may make an excellent contemplative monk, but be of no use as a leader of a boy-scout corps. This young girl who seems so perfectly at home behind the grille would be almost helpless if called to an active apostolate.

And then, seeing the very special requirements of the contemplative life—we will not say that they are greater than those of the active life—it is improbable that it will ensnare so many victims that the active works will be seriously handicapped. It is often the case that an enclosed order is most successful in the ministry of souls, whether it be the management of a workroom or the supervision of a class. Evidently there is no cause for misapprehension, and it is for the faithful soul to decide under the advice of a wise director which form of life she should choose;.

In reality the opposition between the contemplative and active life which some people imagine, as if one were useful and the other useless, does not exist. There are these two ways of life, each with their differing forms of activity, one which is immediate and close at hand, the other which is more distant but none the less efficacious.

" Apostolic workers are needed, and you talk of retiring from the battlefield. Go off at once, to the workshop, to the vineyard."

" Yes, it is quite true that there is a scarcity of workers.

I can see it for myself and it grieves me, but I am not going into the cloister in order to isolate myself, but to help others. The Master foretold that there should be two categories of workers: 'Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send labourers into his harvest.' "[1]

The contemplative orders by their prayers not only to a large extent ensure the possibility of *active recruits* in the world, but also largely increase the *fecundity* of the *work*. Divine grace is the one essential element in all apostolic work, whether it be the conversion of what is bad to what is good, the desire to do better, or the attainment of the highest virtues. And the great means of obtaining grace, coupled with external zeal which has been mentioned already, and self-sacrifice that will be dealt with later—is prayer. Wherever there is the maximum volume of prayer, there will be the greatest influence with God and the greater facility in doing good.

It is true that many of the actions of the apostle work *ex opere operato*—that is to say, by the virtue of the sacrament, not by the virtue of him who administers it. But this is not all; and even where the rite works of itself, apart from the dispositions of the minister, is it not true that his good virtues form an element in the success of the work? The crowd rapidly sees if the man who is speaking is a man of God or not. It quickly recognizes whether his brow is radiant with some of the light that lit up the face of Moses when he came down from Mount Sina. Both believers and unbelievers soon discover if there is the spirit of prayer behind the spoken word: if there is not, it is empty and of little use.

Who can provide the apostolic worker with the prayers he needs? In the first instance it will be himself above all others; but what a gain it is if the professionals in contemplation and divine praise who are in close contact with God, can add 20, 50, 100 per cent. to his own prayers and thus increase the power of his words.

[1] St Luke x 2.

Mgr. Benson in the *Light Invisible* describes, in the chapter entitled *In a Convent Chapel*, how the priest penetrated one day into the chapel of an enclosed order who spent their lives in interceding for sinners. There was a nun kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament. It came to him that here were influences of which he could only catch a glimpse, but what he did discover was that " there ran a vital connection from the Tabernacle to the woman. You may think of it as one of those bands you see in machinery connecting two wheels, so that when either wheel moves, the other moves too. . . . I perceived that this black figure knelt at the centre of reality and force, and with the movements of her will and lips controlled spiritual destinies for eternity. There ran out from this peaceful chapel lines of spiritual power that lost themselves in the distance, bewildering in their profusion and terrible in the intensity of their hidden fire. Souls leaped up and renewed the conflict as this tense will strove for them. Souls even at that moment, leaving the body, struggled from death into spiritual life, and fell panting and saved at the feet of the Redeemer on the other side of death."[1]

And this soul at the priedieu or in her stall will be succeeded by another who will carry on the work, and like the one who has preceded her will bring her volume of prayer to swell the treasures of the communion of saints. After her, another, and so on, and the chain will never be broken unless some wilful intruder, interfering under the pretext of some work of public utility to be done, or imaginary good to be obtained, should intervene. These are the indispensable servants who perform the most indispensable tasks.

The apostle of the active ministry has a difficult time: he knows the price of a soul, the importance of salvation, and the necessity of giving souls to Jesus Christ. But he also knows by a rapidly acquired experience, how the human soul can oppose the advances of God, how sometimes he and his fellow-workers feel the bitter need of finding somewhere, no matter

[1] *The Light Invisible*, by R. H. Benson.

where, as long as it comes to hand, a means of making an impression upon this rock which nothing can pierce, to find a weak spot in these jealously guarded defences. To want to convert a soul and to be unable to do anything; to strike the rock with a stick and for no water to appear; to see his balls lying in a pitiful row at the foot of the wall which they are unable to surmount, he has been through all this.

Our Lord, nevertheless, has told us to "Ask, and it shall be given you . . . knock, and it shall be opened to you."[1] "And whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do."[2] This is quite true, but my prayer can not remain by itself, it needs the support of a multitude of other prayers.

This is where the wonderful band of contemplatives come into line.

"I think that those who pray do more for the world than those who write," said a prominent Spanish statesman, "and that if the world goes from bad to worse it is because there are more battles than there are prayers." And, again, in another place: "To my mind the monastic is the ideal life;"[3] it should be added, for those who are called. We must be careful, on the pretext of giving the contemplative life the praise it deserves, not to take away from the active life the merits and good results which its zeal merits. Hands are raised to heaven on the mountain top, but in the plain also there are strong arms holding the weapons of defence. Active workers are needed, we must have both teachers and hospital nurses, and many of them. The Abbé Hulst, when curate of St Ambrose, in Paris, wrote to his sister on her entry into the Convent of Perpetual Adoration, in these words: "Your vocation makes all of you the most useful, one might almost say the only useful apostolic workers; this is my predominant thought amid the bitter disillusionments of our ministry in this apostate city." We must be prepared for certain misadventures inseparable from all contact between an over-

[1] St Matt. vii 7. [2] St John xiv 13.
[3] *Daniel Cortes*, ii, 124.

keen and inexperienced zeal, and certain cut and dried phases of apostolic labour which yet are so sanctifying. Each of the particular functions in the Church has its relative importance which must be preserved, and each is too beautiful for it to be permissible to envy its neighbour. And while exalting the pressing needs of the active orders and of external zeal, let us not forget the incomparable value of the contemplative life and its power for good in the fight against evil.

Péguy makes the Eternal Father speak in these terms: "All this immense volume of prayers and penance is like a sharp sword raised in attack against me; the prayers of all these children of the one Father, with the prayer of the Son in the first place, and behind it the virginal *Aves*. You can readily understand that I am completely disarmed, and what can I do? my Son has told them to do this, and more still, when on earth he placed himself at their head." These words are in no way contrary to Christian dogma.

The heart of God the Father can never resist for long the penetrating influence of this silent flood of hundreds of prayers, with our Lord's own prayer at the head. Blessed be those faithful souls who at the foot of the Tabernacle or the Monstrance gather together and offer up their apostolic and victorious hours of recollection. This passer-by who mocks as he goes off to amuse himself, ought to know that if there were not behind the grille, or in some attic, or even in some pretty room, someone who is praying for him and in his place, on this very corner of the earth which at this moment he, a living being, is treading, there would have been for some time past a soul that is dead.

It will be one of the joys of Paradise to find out all that the world owes to these obscure workers, those prayers to which it owes its salvation.

BOOK III

THE APOSTOLATE OF SUFFERING

Chapter VI

ITS DOCTRINAL BASIS

I. *Every Christian* can *offer his sufferings for the good of souls.*
II. *Every Christian* ought *to offer them for this purpose.*
III. *Satisfaction, substitution and solidarity.*

I

"SOULS are instructed by word of mouth," said Father Chevrier, "but they are saved by suffering."

To offer sacrifice is more apostolic than to pray, and prayer will not bear fruit unless it is marked with a drop of blood.

Words alone rarely reach the depths of the heart. Man's free will, that is capable of resisting the strongest appeals of God, can naturally even more easily refuse to listen to the word of man, and his labour is in vain.

The one weapon that never fails is self-sacrifice. A priest complained to the Curé d'Ars that he had tried every means to convert his parish, and yet there was no result. "You have left nothing undone? Have you fasted? Have you worn the hair shirt and taken the discipline? Until you have suffered on behalf of your flock you cannot say that you have exhausted every effort to bring them back to God."

These are the words of a saint: suffering is the coinage by means of which we purchase strength.

Our Lord by his example shows us that suffering is the

great means of redemption, and the word is used here in its broadest sense, and not as merely applicable to physical suffering. In his choice of methods for the furtherance of his mission, he made great use both of acts of external zeal and of prayer. But the culminating point of his work of redemption was the Cross.

It is true to say that the smallest action of our Lord's had the power to redeem man: but the Cross, above all else, was the great instrument of salvation: "*Without shedding of blood there is no remission.*"[1] "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?"[2] Our Lord did not regard it as of no consequence what method he chose to redeem the world, he constituted himself the one mediator by his sacrifice upon the Cross, and through the shedding of blood man was brought back to life. It is the Cross that dominates the history of Christ and also the history of the whole world.

Standing on the summit of Calvary, this sign of our redemption, by its supernatural power, holds sway over all nations and all ages. If a man in the farthest corner of the universe were to turn his head towards this awe-inspiring spot, he would see the blood-stained footprints, the Cross raised on high, and on it this bleeding human yet divine person and the light shining from that figure. And it is by his death upon the Cross with outstretched arms and hands pierced by the nails, that he is our protector and has won for us eternal life.

Even before the Cross was raised upon the hill of Calvary, by a marvellous anticipatory power it was able to preserve the world. Its shadow cast the sign of redemption upon the very cradle of the human race, this poor weak newborn human nature, which after it had sinned heard the promise of a redemption to come. All the figures in the Old Testament were living in expectation of the Messias who would set them free. The trials which Emmanuel would have to undergo are minutely described, in greater detail here even than in the Gospel, for only in the Prophets are to be found the enumera-

[1] Heb. ix 22. [2] St Luke xxiv 26.

tion of all the events of the Passion, such as the vinegar and gall, and the casting of lots for the seamless robe at the foot of the Cross.

It is not only the Prophets, and Isaias above all, who are most detailed in their account of the sufferings of the divine Victim: "*Surely he hath borne our infirmities*," "*A man of sorrows*,"[1] and the rest; but on almost every page of the Old Testament there appears a figure announcing the coming of the suffering Redeemer: Abel, Isaac, Joseph, Job, and all the confessors and martyrs recorded in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Others were racked . . . had trial of mockeries and stripes: moreover also of bonds and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about . . . being in want, distressed, afflicted: of *whom the world was not worthy*."[2]

They announced the Messias, and of those who lived later on it can be said that they *completed* his work. By their prayers and holiness of life, they obtained from God the preservation of those towns and provinces and of the entire world, when he would have swept them away in a fresh deluge because of the sins of their inhabitants.

Then appeared at last, after many types and prophecies, the promised Messias.

He was born, and suffering was on the look-out for him in the cradle at Bethlehem, and even as early as this tendered him its bitter caresses. At Nazareth, in Egypt, all through his ministry, suffering followed our Lord like a shadow. "*The whole life of Christ was a cross*."[3] Up to the moment when, laid on the rough Cross, she fastened the poor torn Body with the nails and held him until his last sigh.

The sacrifice of Calvary was decreed from the beginning of the world: "*which was slain from the beginning of the world*,"[4] and now it is accomplished, it is no longer an

[1] Isa. liii 3, 4.
[2] Heb. xi 35-38.
[3] *Imitation*, Book II, chap. xii 7.
[4] Apoc. xiii 8.

anticipation, it is an existing reality, a reality which, in the past, dominated everything, but now stands forth in all its merciful yet tragic meaning.

Whatever path man may take to find God, always if he goes far enough he will come up against the Cross. It seems as if it barred the horizon, but this is not so; it is the means by which we rise up to God. Our petty troubles can become either a hindrance or a means of raising us to God, but only good can come from the Cross of Christ.

Thus has our Lord inaugurated the first apostolate of suffering, and it was his wish that it should be the most fruitful part of his ministry, and for the disciple of Christ the same law holds good.

Is it not a fact that all those whom the Master has most closely associated with himself in the work of redemption, have, in proportion, been the nearest to him in their self-immolation?

In the first place there is Mary, the mediatrix, beside the Redeemer, the *Mater Dolorosa* at the foot of the Cross. Some day we shall discover the degree in which our Lady has co-operated in this work of our salvation. Of course our Lord is the one mediator, but it is also true that Mary has collaborated in the work to a greater extent than anyone else. Hence the tragic promise of the child who should be "a sign which shall be contradicted," and of "a sword that should pierce her soul." Was it not in order that the compassion of the Mother should respond to the passion of the Son, the Man of Sorrows beside the sorrowful Virgin Mother?

After our Lady, it is the apostles whom our Lord unites most intimately to his work of redemption, and to them also he promises the largest share in his Cross. One day he explained to them that which would come to pass. "The Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death."[1] And so as

[1] St Matt. xx 18.

they shall grasp their duty to resemble him, he adds: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."[1] On another occasion he takes the opportunity of reminding them that the servants will receive the same treatment as their Master. "The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."[2] These words follow closely after his statement: "I have chosen you . . . that you should go and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain."[3] This is a clear proof that persecutions and trials are inseparable from a fruitful ministry.

In the following chapter he adds: "In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world."[4] This was merely the promise of what should come, the history of the Church will show that it has not been in vain, and that the dry wood has received the same treatment as the green wood: the Church has been founded in blood.

"Where art thou going, Lord?" asked St Peter of our Lord when he appeared to him on the road to Rome: and when he questioned Jesus as to what he was going to do in Rome, our Lord replied: "I am going to Rome to be crucified again." The successors of St Peter can re-echo these words: all the popes in the first three centuries were martyrs, with a few rare exceptions.

All through the centuries wherever a specially fruitful apostolate is to be found, it will not require a long search to discover the reason for its success: there was the shedding of blood in its birth-pangs. It was not always the blood in the veins that was spilt, but at least there was the inner sacrifice, the bruising of the heart and will, and the total sacrifice of self.

There is only one method of coming into the world—*in dolore paries*. Never a child is born, whether of the body or

[1] St Matt. xvi 24.
[2] St John xv 20.
[3] *Ibid.*, xv 16.
[4] *Ibid.*, xvi 33.

the soul, except through pain. And in its subsequent growth it is the same thing; unless the grain is *buried* in the soil, the seed will not germinate.

II

There is something more than merely a theoretical idea of utilizing suffering in our work for others. Everyone who is inspired by the true Christian spirit will feel an urgent desire to adopt this practice.

If, after the example of our Lord, we are able to make use of our acts of self-renunciation for the salvation of the world, our *union* with him in the bond of his mystical Body *urges* us not to forget this duty.

Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and Jesus Christ alone. But as has been said repeatedly, this means the *whole* Body of Jesus Christ, not only the head, but the head and *his members*. Therefore, the Saviour of the world, to a certain degree to be determined, but none the less sure, is *each one of us*.

If, as has been seen, it is true that our Lord desired to redeem the world principally by his sacrifice on the Cross, so also have we the right to be included in this redeeming sacrifice.

By our Baptism we are made one with the person of our Saviour, and we are at once associated with him in his work. And what is his work? The redemption of the world, and redemption by sacrifice.

The Christian may be able through ignorance or cowardice to elude this practice, but in strict logic he is bound to it.

Christ is the Saviour.

He is our Saviour by his sacrifice.

Every Christian is a part of the mystical Body of our Saviour: therefore it is incumbent upon him to share in his sacrifice.

Sometimes people do not correctly balance the different

objects which can and should be the aim of our Christian mortification to attain.

They say: learn to conquer yourself in order to preserve your life, to avoid the possibility of temptation and to mould your character—and certainly this is a most pressing task.

Then again: practise self-sacrifice, for you have given way to sin and you must do penance—again nothing better.

But it is possible, and a good thing, to rise out of these personal considerations and widen our horizon, and it is to those souls who are capable of understanding it, that these splendid opportunities of suffering for the sake of others are explained.

It is the Cross which has saved the world: the Cross of the Master with a capital letter, and the crosses with a small letter that are our own, and this method of writing the two words has unsuspected depth of meaning. What a find it is to discover that the most puny of our sufferings, if it is accepted as it should be, can be called by this great name—a cross, which signifies redemption.

After the war, a memorial cross was raised in the wood of Caures to a certain officer, General Dréant. The symbolical signification of the monument is far greater than the episode in the war which is carved in the granite. One big cross fills the whole block, and then beneath it are a number of little crosses, and the meaning of it is, that it was the sacrifice of the general and that of his humble soldiers which won the battle.

How much more real—given certain reservations which anyone will see—is the union of Christ and his faithful followers in the work of redemption.

The allied generals could not have won the war without the support of the rank and file. Christ did not require our help in gaining the victory, but he has done us the honour of asking us to aid him with our acts of piety. St Paul was able to say of himself, and it is also true of each of us, if we are generously disposed: "For I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body,"[1]

[1] Gal. vi 17.

making up that which is lacking in the Passion of Christ for his mystical Body which is the Church.

When a faithful soul has to suffer some physical pain, she should, if she realizes her Christian vocation, think of herself as belonging to our Lord, and as being a part of the living crucifix, a member of Christ crucified. "This patient is not a passive victim, he has become an active worker; although paralyzed and prostrate, he is transformed into a power for good in the supernatural world; his very weakness, if accepted in a Christian spirit, becomes the source of his strength. Like the apostle St Paul, he is able to say: 'For when I am weak, then am I powerful.'[1] Is he not, after all, another Christ, since from his own sufferings he can gather up the merits of the redemption and apply them to the needs of his fellowmen?"[2]

Anyone who goes up in an aeroplane, and flies over towns or villages, is struck by the appearance of the crosses surmounting the churches and cathedrals: they stand, these signs of our redemption, in the centre of the most crowded and humble dwellings, a striking landmark indicating the house of God. *Here is God's temple*, and it is recognizable from the sky by the cross.

The Christian also is a temple of God: and the divine Master who from on high is looking down upon us, loves more than aught else to find in us this classic sign of God's temple, the mark of the cross.

We must not imagine that God likes to see his creatures in pain, or that his glory is increased solely by the troubles, the mischief our awkward mistakes inflict on the creatures whom he made for joy; in no way does this fit into the primitive scheme of him who is uncreated joy. But his love gives an infinite dignity even to the most unavoidable sufferings of his creatures, because he finds in them a brilliant reflection of his Son our Lord, and his redeeming Passion.

[1] 2 Cor. xii 10.
[2] *Autour du catholicisme social*, by G. Goyau, i, p. 76.

The Son yearns above all things "to show forth to his Father the continuation of his own sufferings in the person of those members who are one with him. Being unable to suffer now that he is in his risen glory, 'knowing that Christ rising again from the dead, dieth no more.'[1] Nor can he suffer, therefore, for the glory of his Father and for our redemption; he wishes to bear pain in the person of his members, whom it is his pleasure to reproduce as so many suffering and crucified Christs, thus perpetuating his sorrowful and loving Passion unto the end of the world."[2]

Jesus our head has risen up into heaven, but he remains on earth in his living members: they are prolongations of the life of Christ, they continue it. This they cannot do unless they carry on the work Christ has commenced. Now Christ saved the world by his immolation, and his members cannot save the world save by self-sacrifice.

III

Certain modern minds will here bring forward a favourite fundamental objection, concerning what may be called *vindictive* justice, which may be expressed in these words:

Why should an infraction of a command require a compensation, and in the case of a refusal, a compensation in form of a penance, which will only add a fresh disturbance to that which exists already? A sacrifice that bears no fruit only does harm to the sufferer, for since it only aims at punishing the offender, it cannot make the excuse that it will cure the offence.

There is no need to be astonished at this opposition to the idea of making satisfaction, and chiefly of penal satisfaction, which implies that it operates by means of some penance inflicted by way of punishment. Man has a horror of suffering, and he endeavours to prove to himself that it has nothing

[1] Rom. vi 9.
[2] *L'Apostolat de la souffrance*, by Père Lyonnard, S.J., vi.

to do with him so that he may be able to shake it off when it comes near. Those others who realize the meaning of justice, will not be surprised that God should demand penal satisfaction for sin.

Every child understands that after enjoying a forbidden pleasure for which he is to blame, a just chastisement will follow. He suffers the pain, but recognizes perfectly well that he deserves it, and every man who is conscientious will acknowledge the same truth in his own case under similar circumstances. His lower nature may rebel, but his higher self will approve.

There is more here than the simple psychological fact.

Theology tells us that there are two elements in every sin, the unlawful pleasure which man takes to himself and the gratuitous injury that he commits against almighty God.

If no satisfaction were demanded to make amends for the forbidden pleasure and to re-establish the balance which has been destroyed, God, if we may say so, would be reduced to ridicule. God is infinitely good, but he must be infinitely just also, or else he would not be God, and the Most High, under pain of not being the Most High, cannot forgo this privilege.

The problem is due in a large degree to our extremely inadequate and feeble notion of sin.

Let us look at sin carefully. What is a mortal sin ? It is that man, placed between the Most High God who lays a command upon him, and his lower nature which rebels, prefers his own capricious desires to the sovereign will of God—his will, which is nothing, to the infinite will. He regards God as nothing, and practically, as it were, suppresses him. His act is a deicide, ineffectual, of course, in its result, but formal in principle, and the most elementary justice demands a compensation. That may be, says the objector, but there is also *substitution* to be made.

In point of fact, it is for us to make reparation for each of our misdeeds, the sinner must do penance for his sin;

but as we know well the world is governed by a merciful dispensation.

Here is an account which must be adjusted, and the payment must be adequate, but it is the innocent man who will make satisfaction for the crime, and reason, far from rising up in arms at such a suggestion, bows its head.

Why should this idea of a person taking on himself the penalty his neighbour has incurred, which in many instances is admitted, be in this case condemned ? If the delinquent refuses to do penance or is forcibly prevented, should God consider that his justice has been satisfied or that he has been vanquished ? Is he not permitted to allow another charitable soul to pay the ransom ?

Human nature, that abhors the notion of injustice, admits and applauds the idea of the just man paying for the criminal, yet certain short-sighted philosophers resent it. The faithful soul is quite familiar with the thought of reparation.

The account of Sodom and Gomorrha in the early pages of the Bible shows us God demanding the services of several just men, an incident which throws up in strong relief the notion of making compensation for another.

All through the ages we see the same idea, whenever it is requisite, to make reparation for the sinner or to obtain graces for the just.

Whenever special favours are needed for the Church as a whole, or for one portion of it, God always raises up faithful souls who will offer their sufferings for her. There was St Catherine of Siena at the time of the Avignon schism; when the Dominican order was restored, appeared Anna Moes, Mother Dominic Clare of the Holy Cross, who had, perhaps, more influence upon the development of the movement than even Father Lacordaire.

When reparation is required, as in the case of Alexander VI, Marie Henriquez and St Francis Borgia were found: as a helpmeet to the favoured grand lady at the court of Louis XIV, Louise de la Vallière, there came forward Isabelle de

la Vallière, who, at the age of sixteen, entered the Ursuline novitiate, sacrificed her beautiful hair and her renowned beauty, and by her life of extraordinary penance, wrested from heaven the secret of how to obtain the conversion of her sadly notorious niece.

In the picture gallery at Brussels there is a most expressive picture by Rubens which is much admired. It depicts a town in flames, and outlined against this tragic background, soldiers are to be seen chasing some women who are throwing themselves into a pond.

God was ready to strike the world that had provoked him to anger, when St Francis appeared and with his hands marked by the stigmata, raised a barrage. He clasped the whole world in his embrace, and the vengeance of God was arrested by the bleeding hands of the Seraphic Saint, an insignificant but invincible obstacle.

But we have someone far greater even than these innocent souls to preserve the world and save it: we have one man just above all others, the divine, crucified Jesus Christ.

> Balance sublime upon whose beam
> Was weighed the ransom of mankind.

The Cross, says the *Vexilla Regis*, is the instrument by which satisfaction is made, and nothing shows more clearly the necessity of adjusting the scales of justice, than this description of the great shadow with the two crossed beams, weighing down the balance against God's anger.

The penalty here is martyrdom; the crime of man demands the death of the God-Man. A sin, as has been seen, is a form of deicide that is both effective and ineffectual. In order to punish adequately this deliberate turning away from God by man, nothing less would suffice than the deliberate turning away of God from man. The death of man would be an ironical mode of making satisfaction for such an act as the taking away of the life of God—which, although it is an impossibility, yet is none the less willed by man.

The death of the God-Man will solve the problem: it will have a human value since he is true man, and a divine worth because he is divine. The satisfaction made will be rigorous, full, and most important of all, superabundant and overflowing.

Here the third wonder appears: not only does our Lord make *satisfaction*, not only is he *substituted* for us, but also he made himself *one with us*. Jesus has taken upon himself the largest share, and he does us the honour of asking us to bear our part. He takes us as his associates in the great work of the salvation of souls. The salvation of the world will not be the achievement of one isolated person, even when this is the Child of the Virgin-Mother, the Father's Son: it will be the work of the whole Christian assembly, Christ and Christians joined together. The last of the faithful, provided he is a living member of Christ, and has a heart sufficiently large to be able to include in his intentions all the other living members of Christ, can use the most insignificant of his daily crosses as a means of saving the world.

The theological explanation of the office of God the redeemer, in its fullest meaning, is composed of two parts.

In the first place there is the question: how the Word took on our human nature in order to save the world ? and

Secondly, how he calls upon us to carry on his work by and in each of our human natures ? Alas ! how many souls are there who realize the far-reaching demands of the Christian life, who think of how they are called upon to prolong the life of our Lord on earth, to share in and complete his sacrifice upon the Cross ?

It is precisely because many persons take no interest in this work, or shun it, that our Lord asks that others, who are more alert or more generous, shall take a larger part in the co-operative work of redemption. He begs of them a more thorough and more brilliant apostolate by suffering.

" I am just," said our Lord to Teresa Dunerin, " so that when a soul has fulfilled her own personal task, I take what

remains over and above of her work of expiation, and make it my own divine property. I unite it then to my superabundant merits, and with the accumulation of the virtue of my expiations and those of my elect, I make up a treasure of which I am jealous. This is the cause of the excessive penances which make the life of my chosen souls an incessant martyrdom, and judging things by my own divine standard, I press forward the work and increase their sufferings. Much labour is required in order to make the divine life spring forth anew in poor human nature."

The foundress of the congregation of " the Friends of the Poor " was urged forward by the same inner inspiration. She exclaimed: " Oh for souls, who are not merely compassionate but are also generous, yearning to prove their love for our Lord by their penances. They are needed to arouse these others, who are sleeping in their comfortable lives with their selfish routine of well-being. Victims are required, Jesus is looking for them. Since he can no longer suffer in his glorified Body, his Heart, wounded with love, looks for faithful souls from whom he can draw the graces necessary to raise the many dead who are sleeping in these terrifying graves.

" We are at a decisive hour: the good have suffered much and their penances and appeals for mercy are on the point of being heard. But in order to obtain a decisive victory, and for Jesus, the Victim, to triumph, voluntary martyrs of charity will be required: the heroic actions of the just are needed to weigh down the scales of mercy. At this price alone, the alarming dangers with which the enemy menaces us can be avoided."[1]

God, as will be seen in the next chapter, is most successful in discovering these voluntary victims who offer themselves for the honour of his Son Jesus Christ, and the preservation and extension of his Church.

[1] *Thérèse Dunerill*, by Hamez, pp. 483 and 510.

Chapter VII

ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

I. *The relative scarcity and abundance of these apostles of penance.*
II. *The great mainspring—love.*
III. *The objections to it.*

I

SOULS who are willing to pray are to be found, and also, and in larger number, souls who will undertake active good works: but those are very rare who will suffer; there are very few kings and queens upon this royal road. The vocation to a life of mortification is the most mysterious, the most sublime and divine calling, and yet so rare. Yet perhaps it is less uncommon than appears at first sight. Anyone who knows the instinctive repulsion of man for suffering and the way in which he avoids it is puzzled, or perhaps full of admiration, at the enthusiastic manner in which certain souls devote themselves to it.

This apparent contradiction shall be explained.

Souls who know how to suffer are not numerous, those who have to suffer are never lacking.

It might have been thought that, seeing the incredibly widespread suffering in the world, it would have been turned to its best advantage: but in point of fact this is not so. There are crosses in profusion, but not only are the souls who will utilize these crosses by no means numerous, but if it happens that some are discovered here or there, we are astonished and enraptured. What a pity it is to come into touch with and ourselves possess so many opportunities for merit, so many possibilities of winning salvation for the multitude and to let them be lost.

It is not as if there were no difficulty in turning away the suggestion of self-sacrifice: it is not necessary to have lived

long in the world to know that it takes us by storm and imposes itself on us. Someone remarked to a little girl who was weeping bitterly: " Look at your dolly, she isn't crying." The child answered, with a deeper meaning than she could realize: " No, but she would cry if she were alive."

When the whole world suffers, how sad it is that so few make use of their sufferings!

There are not many people, even among faithful souls, who would have had the faith of this young man who was dying of creeping paralysis, and wrote to his friends in these words: " When people come to see me, I say to them sometimes that I am not in the least unhappy; for happiness can be found in every condition of life if only we know how to look for it where it is, in God. And I see them looking at me in astonishment and with a troubled air as if they were wondering whether I had not some cerebral affection. . . . Those of us who have the happiness of realizing the value and urgent necessity of suffering, are truly privileged souls, and owe an infinite debt of gratitude to God."

To the Jews Christ was foolishness, to the Gentiles he was a scandal, and there are many Christians who resemble the Jews and Gentiles of whom St Paul was speaking, or the friends of the young man in the letter that has just been quoted. How many people are there who, in the words of the *Imitation*, protest themselves ready to " follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of his passion."[1] To go with him as far as Gethsemani or Calvary is quite another matter.

If only everyone who has to bear suffering knew the value and possible purchasing power of his pains: if he could but realize the virtue that flows from the humblest of his acts of self-renunciation when they are united with the sufferings of our Saviour Jesus Christ!

" If divine Providence wished that I should be tied hand and foot and unable to move, still I should be able to say that

[1] *Imitation*, Book II, chap. xi.

by my sufferings I was doing my part in the work of redemption. The unknown soul who prays and suffers is frequently a stronger and greater power than he who preaches the Gospel."

It is because this truth has been realized that congregations have been founded whose members labour as hidden victims for the salvation of the world. " Others will be active combatants, apostolic workers who will throw themselves into the fray. We shall be hidden victims in Jesus Christ, and through him, by him, and in him we shall purchase the salvation of the world."[1]

It would appear as if God would have to be very skilful, and his Son all-powerful, to succeed in this prodigy of making the Cross acceptable, still more to cause it to be beloved and sought after, sometimes by persons who naturally have a rooted horror of it. And nowhere is the power from on high more manifest.

What are the facts ?

Outside the world, and even sometimes in the world, instances are to be found of the gift of self and of vocations to an unparalleled life of self-sacrifice: history at different periods shows this.

There is St Rose of Viterbo: " She lived as a recluse, a victim for the Church. Her whole life was a kind of realization of the truth of the communion of saints: she knew that she was one with the great body of the Church of which St Paul speaks, and this thought made her both very humble and very proud. She was humble because as a child of seven years she wished to lay upon her fragile shoulders the responsibility for all the sins which endangered the life of the Church: she was proud because it appeared to her that her membership with the Church gave a high value to her life. . . . She had a delicate yet precocious realization of the bond of union which united her to the rest of the faithful, and of the inter-penetration which should

[1] Mother Mary of Jesus, Foundress of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart.

be established between her small individual existence and the collective life of the Church."[1] And for one example known to men, that can be read about in writings, how many similar cases are there not in the history which is never written? What do we know of the secrets of the individual conscience?

It is a curious fact that even the Protestant religion, which at the Reformation denied the doctrine of merit, has been able to produce at any rate one of its members, a young Swiss girl, who understood what it meant. While still quite young, she lived in almost continual agony. "I believe," she writes, "that suffering accepted with submission can become a great blessing for us. But I am sure that we can go further, and that by willingly accepting our crosses and uniting them to the Cross of Christ, we can do our share in an appreciable degree, in furthering the final triumph of good over evil."[2]

She also remarked: "If I am not able to realize my ideal, at any rate I will idealize my whole being." And her exalted manner of utilizing her sufferings, and her way of thinking of it, was an admirable method of idealizing her whole self.

Yet clearly it is Catholics, and among them those who most fully grasp the faith, who will afford the grandest example of their realization of the meaning of expiatory suffering.

Three young girls, Madeline, Louise and Caroline Clement, were making altar-linen: one of them slipped a little note between the folds of the pall which was to be given to the parish priest for daily use in covering the chalice. In it were written these words: "We desire, Jesus, all three of us, to suffer like thee and with thee . . . strike and do not spare us: may we satisfy thy justice so that thou mayest save these poor sinners."[3]

Four other girls at the Sanatorium of Villepinte were full

[1] *Autour du catholicisme social*, by G. Goyau, pp. 125, 126.
[2] Adèle Kamm.
Caroline Clement, by P. Henry, C.S.S.R., p. 90.

of grief because their family was outside the true religion: they longed to obtain the much desired conversion of these dear ones. "But they had nothing to offer; so each of them took her life in her hands, and giving it the name of a flower, they made up a nosegay which they presented to our Lady, and asked her to give in return those graces that were so urgently needed. From that time forward they never called one another by any name except that of the flower which each had chosen, the lily, the violet, the rose and the daisy, and petal by petal the flowers dropped and the violet was the last to be gathered."[1]

There is a letter written by Mgr. Gay to his sister on November 5, 1870, in which he speaks of the misfortunes which had befallen Pope Pius IX. "All this will only last for a time; God will shorten the days owing to the prayers and penances that rise without ceasing to his throne," and as confirmation of these words he recounts the following story. "At Strasbourg there is a workroom for children and young girls, which is managed by some ladies who live here. The time came for some of these little girls to make their First Communion, and on the eve of the day several of them thought they would like to offer themselves as victims for their country: permission was given and they did so. On the morrow a shell fell on the room where they were gathered together, killing five and wounding five others who are still seriously ill; they are bearing their sufferings with an heroic patience."

But women are not alone in this work, there are men also. Leon Harmel, the "good Father" of the model Catholic factory and village of Val des Bois, instilled this same idea into the minds of his workmen and workwomen. This act, part of which is given in these pages, was made every Sunday after the elevation in the chapel at the factory. "Every day, my God, the accidental glory and happiness which is thy due from all thy creatures is diminished by the crimes of

[1] *Combats d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, by De Mull, i, p. 562.

sinners, while at the same time they are doing themselves irreparable harm unless thou wilt come to their aid.

" By an act of admirable condescension of thy infinite bounty which throughout eternity we shall praise, thou hast willed to associate us in the great work of repairing this two-fold evil, and we consecrate our whole selves to this work.

" By our Communions of reparation we will offer thee consolation for the neglect thou dost receive.

" By our assistance at Masses which are not of obligation, we will ask that those who through negligence do not hear Mass on Sundays may be converted.

" During our work we will pray for those who never pray, and

" Finally, we will offer our trials and difficulties for those who refuse to give thee their hearts."[1]

But it is not only in the factory and in the ranks of manual labour that this realization of the needs of the human soul are to be found; it is the same thing in every sphere of life, there is to be found a similar understanding of this apostolate by self-sacrifice. Allusion has been made already to certain acts of generosity among those who were in the rear of the fighting line during the war: the front line was always then as ever in the lime-light. There are fragments of stories, of acts of intimate self-oblation made for the salvation of others; chaplains or first-line soldier-priests can bear witness to the wonderful examples of generosity in this respect which they have come across.

A general who lost his life at Soissons wrote in the autumn of 1914: " What a quantity of blood and tears will be necessary to wash away our miseries, and of what a rare quality they will have to be. It is the blood of the bravest and best that will save us." He did not mention in his letter to his dear ones that he ventured humbly, yet with pride, to include himself as one of the brave soldiers who would shed his blood.

[1] *Manuel d'une corporation chrétienne*, by Leon Harmel.

And the soldiers knew how to rise to these heights as well as their officers.

In a church in the Pas de Calais, the ciborium had been profaned and the Hosts scattered: an Irish regiment were occupying these quarters, and on the suggestion of their chaplain, Father Aubrey Gwynne, some of the soldiers put up the following notice on the door: "In reparation for this sacrilege, the undersigned offer the sacrifice of their lives." Soon after, this doubly heroic company penetrated right into the enemy's line and fought until the last man was killed.

II

Anyone who looks at this strange vocation to self-sacrifice from its external aspect cannot understand the grand virtues which come from the act of sacrifice, nor with what gaiety and how willingly the faithful soul accepts it, and places all her happiness in the possession of it.

That which attracts certainly is not the sacrifice, inasmuch as it entails suffering, it is because the suffering is a convincing and undeniable and decisive proof of love.

Our Lord has said that there is no greater sign of true love than to give one's life for those one loves.

And everyone who even for one day has really loved, knows that this is true: at that very moment he felt the need of suffering to prove his love, otherwise his love was vain. The soul who knows not how to love, likewise does not know what it is to suffer, and the soul who cannot suffer does not deserve to love.

"She who loves can endure," said our Lord to a nun of the Visitation order in the seventeenth century. The wounds of our Lord are open doors: souls who love cannot be content with merely looking at them and compassionating them, they want to have their share, to enter by this road and penetrate to the depths of charity.

It is clear now that it is *love* which inspires the apostolate

by suffering: love for God, for Christ, and for souls, *the love of God.*

God has a right to our respect, our obedience and our love. Men insult him, they scorn his commands and hate him. We offer ourselves to God to compensate for these offences and to render to him all the honour which these others should have paid to him had they been faithful, an equal glory, or, if possible, a greater glory. This desire is instinctive in every noble soul. In a family the elder son has insulted his mother: what do the little ones do if they love her? They climb on to her knees while she is weeping and cry: "Mummy, don't pay any attention to big brother who has been rude to you, we will love you for him and ourselves."

As a general rule it is the *love of our Saviour* crucified that leads souls to devote themselves to the work of reparation: "I looked for one to console me and I have found no one."

Can this be possible? I will come forward and console our Lord in his sorrow. Even if my sufferings can only give a feeble relief to his, even if I can do almost nothing, yet I cannot be hindered from offering this almost nothing to him. A charming legend tells of a little bird that came and perched on the Cross on Calvary, and with his beak tried to extract one of the thorns from the crown of thorns on the head of Christ, hence the blood-red stain which he has borne on his breast ever since.

If I cannot do more, at any rate it will not be my fault if a thorn is not taken away from the beloved Master's painful crown.

"Dost thou imagine, O Eternal One," said St Teresa to our Lord crucified, "that I love thee because of the future reward in thy kingdom? . . . Oh no! I love thee because thou hast been ill-treated. Thee, my God, laden with fetters, thee, my God, led to execution by the executioners. I love thee because the cry was wrung from thee: 'Why hast thou abandoned me?'

"When I am assisting at thine agony, it seems as if I were

on familiar ground, that this Magdalen thy Saint who is weeping at the foot of the Cross is perhaps myself. . . She did not love thee more than I do, for only once in her life did she lie prostrate, her tears mingling with the blood-stained dust on Calvary, only once, and I, how many times? . . .

"Thou and I, Lord, no one else, we two alone so near to one another and yet so far. For I am so far beneath thy feet and thou art above me in this terrifying height, fastened with nails to these cedar-wood beams. I am prostrate on my knees in silence, but my heart is tormented by the sufferings of thy body: the thorns on thy brow have pierced my temples, the nails in thy hands have torn my palms, the wound in thy side makes my heart bleed. And yet, although I am down here in the dust, yet I am so one with thee, my God, that I feel as if I were up there and I were crucified with thee."

In reality, to offer to share the sufferings of Christ cannot actually bring him solace.

Christ, henceforward in glory, cannot actually suffer. But it is quite exact to say that my generous wish at this moment to lessen his sufferings diminished the pain of the Agony and the Crucifixion in the past. In the same way, my cowardice at the present time cannot wound our Lord now that he is impassible in glory, but it is quite exact to say that my present act of cowardice weighed with all its power upon the overwrought soul of our Saviour in the Agony and on the Cross, and in those sad moments increased his sufferings.

Let it not be said that this is ancient history, no, it is history of the present day. I am actually either an executioner or a consoler of Jesus Christ. And the fact that my action had its effect in the past, does not make it less cruel, or less lovable.

After using the apostolate of suffering for the love of God or of Christ crucified, generous souls are invited to adopt it for the *love* of *souls*.

"If we are capable of loving and we find a picture of God that has been treated sacrilegiously in some way, our hearts bleed, and we do our best to repair the injury. We kiss with respect and love this sacred picture which these vile creatures in their pride have made an object of hatred and scorn; we cleanse it from every stain, and try to get rid of the smallest trace of the sacrilegious profanation.

"And it is the same thing when we love souls. Each soul is an image of God, and too often, alas! it has been marred by sin.

"If, when we are full of this idea, we were to meet a soul who had fallen into sin, our hearts would grieve intensely, and we should be angry with the cruel criticisms of the hypocritical world. But it is not sufficient only to prevent the sinner from being dishonoured, love demands more than this; we respectfully draw near to this wounded soul, and offer ourselves to help him recover his true well-being. Not content with comforting words, love desires to act, and offers itself as a victim, and takes upon itself the sinner's misdeeds, and satisfies the divine justice by its sufferings."[1]

If, therefore, by our merits we are able to offer *retrospective* consolation to our divine Master in his sufferings, we can also, by the same merits at this present time, succour all those who are the disciples of the Master in their hour of need, and who maybe are requiring just this one act of virtue, this sacrifice, to win for them the grace to rise victoriously out of sin, or if they are in a state of grace, to give them an increase of divine life.

In the early days of Christendom those who had apostatized through fear of torture, when they repented of their sin, would seek out the martyrs in order that their readmittance into the Church might be hastened. They implored their intercession, and the Bishop, out of consideration

[1] *Une âme bénédictine*, by Dom P. de Hemptinne, pp. 143, 144.

for the merits of these persons who were about to shed their blood for Jesus Christ, pardoned those who had denied our Lord.

The sacrifice of valiant souls at this time and for always will be the key to the kingdom of heaven for all deserters and bad soldiers.

III

It may be objected that it is all the same to say I am worth something or I am worthless: what is the use of my adding a drop of water to the wine in the chalice?

But supposing our Lord does not ask for more? He knows quite well that our share is bound to be limited; however generous a human soul may be, she is human, and therefore restricted and capable of very little. Also it is not a case of giving a great deal, but of giving all we have. So, even if you are very insignificant, if the little you are able to do is offered generously, can you declare that it is nothing?

In addition, the merit of an action does not come solely from the nature of the act, but from the intention that makes us perform it. An act of heroism can be accomplished by a small mind either from vanity or despair, and equally a small action can be the doing of a large mind. The most unimportant duty performed with an apostolic spirit can save the world; the most brilliant speech made from a selfish motive is doubly insignificant, both on the part of him who makes it, and for the world, that gains nothing from it.

"Mademoiselle," said a little girl to her school-mistress one day, "mummy wanted me to cut some wood for her, but I said no, because I didn't like doing it. Then suddenly I thought of little Jesus, and I offered the intention of this wood-cutting for the salvation of souls; I am sure I must have saved at least ten with each blow of the axe."

Was she mistaken, this plucky child, to attribute such a large number of conversions to her actions?

But there is an even better answer. It is true that by yourself you can do little, and your offering is only a drop of water, but your very term of comparison can be used to refute your argument. Do you imagine that your self-sacrifice draws its value from your own personal worth? Your sacrifice is worthless as a sacrifice unless it is united to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The drop of water is changed into the Precious Blood at the Consecration, for the reason that it has mingled already with the wine in the chalice. By itself it would remain forever nothing but a drop of water. Your petty act of self-sacrifice derives all its redemptive merit from its union with the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, whose member you are.

Then the soul complains that she has not sufficient merits to pay for her *own* failings or to obtain her *own* sanctification. Does not a properly ordered charity demand that we should begin with ourselves?

Are you quite sure that by working for others you are not also working for yourself in the best possible way? There are two commandments, love for God, and love for our neighbour, and the second commandment is like the first. To perform an act of supernatural love for our neighbour, is it not equally, though in an indirect manner, since charity is a theological virtue, to make an act of love to God?

God would be lacking in power or very inattentive, if he used your charity for your neighbour as an argument against you. Do not be afraid, will not our Lord come to the assistance of those who are helping him in his work of saving the world? We cannot believe that he will allow himself to be vanquished.

In every life there are many failures: and we must work energetically either to overcome them or supply what is lacking, but woe to the type of spiritual life that cannot rise out of itself. Stand still for a moment and think of other souls. You are part of Christ: think of what this means, and of all those who ought to be one with Christ: besides,

the best method of reaching the maximum degree of individual perfection is to give the maximum effort to bring others into the way of perfection. Each human being should be interested in the welfare of his fellow-creatures. When we discover that we are carrying the world on our shoulders, we quickly find, like St Christopher, that the burden is heavy, and there is no surer way of making a saint, than the responsibility of sanctifying others.

All this I allow. I wish to offer my sacrifices to save and sanctify others. But how is this possible? I am a sinner: I have continually before me the memory of my falls; I ought to be a saint for this work and I am far from that; only the acts of self-sacrifice of pure souls can possibly have a redemptive value.

We must not confuse the sinner with his sin. No one can merit unless he is in a state of grace; it is the one fundamental condition, as has been said. But the fact that we have been sinners does not hinder our actual power of meriting, nor our actual good works from bearing fruit. It would be better to use the memory of our sins as an urgent incentive to greater generosity. It is true that there is a wonderful perfume in the oblations of souls that have kept their innocence, and that it has a great power for good, but is there not also a perfume of repentance that can gain much, in the offerings of souls that have fallen and valiantly risen up again?

St John was not the only person at the foot of the Cross; there was Magdalen, and who would venture to state that St Augustine saved fewer souls than a saint who has never sinned grievously?

Let us leave to the innocent souls the benefit of their pure offerings, and we on our part will try to be doubly generous to compensate for that which we lack.

Never forget that for the salvation of the world there are two persons, Christ and you. If the drop of water you put into the chalice is, in spite of your effort, lifeless, Christ will

transubstantiate it even more wonderfully. The less beautiful your past, the more readily Christ will give of himself, and by this exchange his honour will be ensured. You constrain him, although it is not your fault, to be, as it were, more than Christ, and he asks nothing better, so be of good cheer.

Then let us go forward with ever-increasing generosity and never lose heart.

Chapter VIII

ITS PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

I. *In the ordinary Christian life.*
II. *In its more lofty interpretation, the total self-abandonment of the victim.*
III. *Its highest degree.*

I

IT will be taken for granted that the soul is won over to the desire for the apostolate by suffering: and what comes next?

How does she set about it?

Is it demanded that she shall offer herself for macerating penances and all the austerities of the hermits?

If this is the case it is useless to go any further, human nature is too frail.

We are not dealing with these sufferings.

A distinction should be made between that which is accessible to all, and that which God may ask of certain elect souls.

The life of every individual entails many sufferings, and everyone is called upon to utilize these unavoidable sacrifices for this grand object.

We can bear pain cursing like the devil, or stoically, or we can suffer from a supernatural motive.

To blaspheme, to stiffen our backs, or to be resigned; of these three attitudes of mind, the last only is Christian.

But there are many ways of suffering in a *Christian* manner: let us see the basic condition, and then its most meritorious developments. The fundamental condition here, as in every act that has a divine value, is a state of grace. The sacrifice

of the Christian soul is no exception to this rule; in order to be meritorious it must be the act of a living member of Christ: a dead man can do nothing.

Allowing, then, for this first and essential condition for having merit, how is our self-sacrifice to attain to its full value and most lofty signification? This will be brought to pass by making our intentions as perfect as possible when suffering knocks at the door.

The motives underlying our actions have not all the same value.

I can make up my mind to self-mastery either for a personal or an apostolic reason.

The personal reason may be, for example, self-preservation or to obtain freedom.

I have sinned; and sin demands not only an act of the virtue of temperance, but one of penance, that will make amends for my unlawful pleasure in giving way to this folly.

Or, perhaps, I have not sinned, at any rate seriously, but I feel within me the possibilities of evil: it is a wise step to strengthen my character so as to be able to resist in the hour of temptation.

These are all excellent motives and recommended by all the masters of the spiritual life.

But we can go further and think of the souls of others.

My sacrifice can help my neighbour, and my position as a living member of the great Victim of redemption enjoins it, that is if I realise my duty and do not fail. I will use all the occasions of bearing pain for this object—namely, to fill up in me, the living member of Christ, what is lacking to the Passion of Christ, and in this way to help the Saviour of the world in his work of saving all men.

Everyone who understands the doctrine of the mystical Body of Christ and his own individual incorporation with our Lord the great Redeemer, cannot avoid being inspired by this great intention.

Here is the flame, the motive underlying the sacrifice; but of what will the fuel for the burnt offering be composed?

In the first place there are all the ordinary troubles that strew the path of every man that comes into the world.

The difficulties involved in doing our duty, and those laid upon us by providential circumstances.

Does it not require great courage and frequent painful struggles to keep the commandments of God and the Church and practise the Christian virtues? Is it not a perpetual giving up of the will? Instead of losing all these opportunities for merit, why should we not offer them for the salvation of souls? whereby our puny actions will render a hundred per cent. interest.

It takes a real spirit of renunciation to enable us to accept all the losses, the griefs, the miseries of this life, dryness in prayer, reverses of fortune, and ill-health.

Here, again, why should not we think of the good of souls? What occasions these are, and there are others ready at hand, of filling up the Passion of Christ. The means are not lacking, but it is we who fail in utilizing them, and do not put them to their greatest use.

To *accept* sufferings is not sufficient for some persons, they yearn to go in *search* of them. "We can offer ourselves for eight or even fifteen days for the conversion of sinners," said the Curé d'Ars one day; "we are suffering from the cold or heat; we deprive ourselves of looking at something, or of going to visit someone which would give us pleasure, etc."

And if we allow ourselves to be drawn towards these sacrifices for the apostolate of souls, what will come next? Not only will our generous impulses increase, but a new and more penetrating light will illumine our lives, and numberless occasions of self-sacrifice, up to now unsuspected, will reveal themselves.

In the first instance our choice of opportunities was left to chance, except in the case of anything serious: but henceforward this is changed, the soul begins to understand the

meaning of interior self-renunciation, an advantage beyond words.

We shall begin to discover, perhaps, that normally a certain portion of these acts of self-sacrifice come under the heading of bodily penances.

We must consult both the obligations of our daily life, and in what direction we owe obedience. It is too readily taken for granted that instruments of penance are only for the cloister. At a time like this when so many people only think of sensual gratification, a little mortification of the body, always with discretion but in a generous spirit, cannot be unseasonable.

Within these limits our courage will find abundant opportunities for exercising itself, while our natural frailty cannot honestly be repelled; is there anyone who is unable to take up the apostolate of suffering?

Is it not open to all?

There is a picture of our Saviour climbing the hill of Calvary which represents him as passing between two ranks of people. On one side are the good, on the other his persecutors; from the side of Christ's enemies numberless hands are upraised in malediction. Among those who love him hands are lifted to protect him, hands of children and old people, of young girls, and women, of workmen and of priests. In each case the hands are uplifted, but the meaning of the gesture is quite different. Why should not your hands be raised to bring consolation, blessing, and salvation?

When St Rose of Lima was still a little girl she would pick flowers and throw them up into the air as offerings for God. Her brother Ferdinand, thinking it was a game, cried out: "I also would like to throw some roses up into the sky: let us see whose will reach the furthest?" The boy's flowers fell to the ground, but his sister's remained a moment suspended in the air and formed the shape of a luminous cross. This incident is reported in the bull of canonization of the saint.

Let us imitate St Rose and take all our acts of self-renunciation, those *little duties*, and throw them at God's feet, like the children at the processions of the Blessed Sacrament, nor need we fear to be treated like little Ferdinand.

These acts of ours will rise and form a cross for the protection of the world. Because of these unimportant little actions which yet bear the imprint of the cross, souls will be led to abandon their former useless and empty mode of life, and become fervent and generous Christians; from mediocre Christians they will become holy, and perhaps, and why not ? pass from death unto life.

II

There are other people who demand more than this, they aspire to the apostolate of suffering under its most exalted form; they would like a complete self-renunciation.

This complete self-immolation, taking into consideration individual preferences, offers itself under two slightly differing forms, according as to whether we are seeking to make God or ourselves the principal agent in the sacrifice. If we prefer to leave to God the initiative of making the choice, it implies the *total giving up of self*, and at its furthest limit, the vow of absolute abandonment or the state of victim—then it is the Master who will arrange the opportunities in accordance with the interests of his glory, we on our side undertake to merely give our assent.

If we prefer to make ourselves the prime mover in the act of self-sacrifice, we are bound to *absolute fidelity*, and the highest degree is reached when we promise to avoid every venial sin, a vow of holy perfection that is most pleasing to God. In this case it is not necessary to require Providence to construct the burnt offering, we build it up ourselves with the little pieces of crosses which our daily tasks never

fail to leave behind. One or two explanations and examples will serve to show the method of putting into practice the highest degree of the apostolate of suffering.

A young Benedictine monk was about to make his first vows: he added to them the following promise:

"I renounce all right to take pleasure in anything whatsoever that is outside thee, O my God, and thy holy will. I abandon to thee my body and all its powers so that it may become one of thy most pleasant resting-places, and may bear those sufferings which it is thy will to send it, for the good of souls. I abandon to thee my soul with all its faculties, so that it may henceforward only live thy life. I offer thee my works of satisfaction for the relief of the souls in purgatory, all my prayers and good deeds, in a word, my whole life and all that it includes, so that thou alone, my beloved Jesus, mayst dispose of it."[1]

Certain persons like to give a suggestion of oblation to their act of abandonment. Not only are they prepared to accept what is sent, but in advance they hold out their arms to invite our Lord to take them. "Lord Jesus, thou who knowest both my weakness and my longing to balance the scales of thy justice, so that the chastisement which is deserved may be changed into love and mercy, vouchsafe to listen to this offering that thou inspirest me to make with my whole heart. My wish is that I should receive no consolations in prayer in order that sinners may pray, and official France be brought to her knees. I accept darkness, spiritual aridity, and being deprived of light so that sinners may be converted and souls enlightened."[2]

This sacrifice of spiritual sweetness and lights in prayer is certainly meritorious. Sometimes the outstretched arms become more audacious, the entreaty more insistent.

Leo Besnardeau, a young Jesuit student, at the com-

[1] *Une âme bénédictine*, p. 54.
[2] *Vie et journal de Sophie de Clay, a Religious of Marie Reparatrice*, pp. 215, 216.

mencement of his religious life, offered himself unflinchingly for the work of reparation. He wrote:

"Jesus, thou who art so lovable, so good, I desire to love thee, and in order to prove my love, I offer myself as a holocaust of love. . . . By this I mean that this love should be a fire to destroy the dominion I have over myself, so that I shall be thy own property, as the spouse belongs to her husband, as thy human body belonged to thee, and thou thyself art of God. I establish thee as absolute master of all my powers, memory, intelligence, and will. By my offering of myself as a victim of expiation, I undertake to bear in my soul and my body the pains due for such offences as thou seest fit to give me. My God, I offer to be like Jesus, and expiate as far as possible all the sins of the world, to be as he was in the Garden of Olives. . . . If this offering is beyond my powers, then, Jesus, I beg of thee to accept it as a simple act of love."

And the same generous impulse inspires similar minds under varying circumstances. Father Lyonnard, the founder of the Archconfraternity of the Agonising Heart of Prayer for the Dying, was the one person above all others who in his own life and by his writings showed the full meaning of the apostolate of suffering, to which he was attracted in his earliest years.

"Jesus, give me the position of the one who makes the sacrifice, send me, as thy heavenly Father sent thee. Heed not the cries of nature nor the weakness of my will. . . . This burnt offering ought to include my whole self, and above all *my heart;* for the heart must be immolated by anguish, weariness, tribulation, and agony as thy Sacred Heart was immolated."

And all through his religious life he was perpetually renewing and deepening this offering.

When a scholastic he wrote: "I promise under pain of venial sin to ask God every day: (1) To suffer in order that the devotions to Mary Immaculate and St Joseph may

become widely spread; (2) that by my sufferings the *Apostleship of Prayer* may have a solid foundation."[1]

On the day of his ordination he promised under the same conditions to offer himself at each elevation to the Eternal Father, " with Jesus Christ, his divine Son, to make reparation by his sufferings for the outrages committed by mankind against the divine Majesty."[2]

A brother in religion of Father Lyonnard, a former Papal zouave, Theodore Wibaux, obtained permission to make the offering of his life. He wrote it down on paper and gave it to someone who undertook to place it in the opening of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. A short time later, he was attacked by a malady that became fatal, and he died, as it appeared, a victim of his great act of generosity.

Victim, we say; that is a word which may easily be used in a wrong sense; too many persons, in the estimation of certain people, call themselves victims. Many exaggerations and confused ideas would be avoided if these expressions were applied solely to the case of the total sacrifice of self, which is of necessity rare and presupposes certain guarantees. This would be, perhaps, too severe a restriction: is it wiser to let the broader application remain ?

The wisest course in this matter is to be careful even in the terms of expression that are used. We ought not, because of these reservations, to clip the wings of these fine enthusiasms, but before giving permission for similar acts of oblation, if it is the case of the director, or if it is we who are directed, it is necessary to know exactly what the soul is about to undertake, or what it is being induced to undertake:

" It is very important to be on the lookout for the slightly presumptuous facility with which many souls give themselves up to the will of God, and offer themselves as victims,

[1] Father Lyonnard was a personal friend of Father Ramière, who was at that time founding the Apostleship of Prayer. (Translator's Note.)

[2] *Apostolat de la souffrance*, by Father Lyonnard, S.J., Introduction, pp. xv, xxvii, and xxxv.

for it is probable that they never suspect how seriously he to whom they have given themselves will take their offering. There are many rights over us that God will never exercise, unless we have first opened the way for him by yielding up our own liberty. A hundredfold happy are those who give themselves whole-heartedly, but they must take into count his great work within them, and the extraordinary acts of self-renunciation he will demand. It cannot ever be an unimportant detail for a creature to be wholly in the hands of the living God. Nevertheless, the fathomless depth of his rights attracts far more than it repulses the souls who know it; faith can realize much more than is required in order for an act of refusal on the part of a faithful soul to appear to her to be absurd and an absolute impossibility."[1]

" To call oneself a victim is easy, and pleasing to our self-love, but to become a victim demands a purity of life, a detachment from creatures, and an heroic abandonment to every form of suffering, abjection, unexpected and unheard-of obscurities, that I think those who at the outset of their spiritual career desire to become what God only develops gradually, are either fools or great saints."

These are the words of Mother Marie Thérèse of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, foundress of the Congregation of Marie Reparatrice, and she could speak with authority. This offering about which she speaks so wisely and so discreetly suggests, in her own case she undertook after serious thought, after having repeatedly made the oblation of her whole self, and a long, careful preparation. And as is well known, she was burnt to death.

This note of prudence is equally apparent in this short extract from the *Recollections of Father Natal*, one of St Ignatius' first companions: " Someone [and he is speaking of himself] asked our Lord that he might be judged worthy of the cross: but he soon found that he was on the wrong road. To ask for crosses we have not received, and to

[1] *L'Abandon*, by Mgr. Gay.

reject those we have, is not playing the game. The cross adapted to thy stature is easy, and thou dost not want it; what wouldst thou do if a larger one were sent thee ? Fewer lofty thoughts, then, and more humility and real generosity."

Before the war, Father Auffroy, who was destined to be one of its most obscure yet startling victims, was living in Rome undergoing a course of training in Canon Law. He went to the Holy Father, and asked him for permission to pray that he and some of his companions might receive the grace of martyrdom. The Pope, who was accustomed to all kinds of requests, but seldom to such a one as this, who, moreover, hardly knew the person who was asking it of him, refused: it is useful to remember this. In point of fact, had the Pope been better informed as to the guarantees in support of this serious demand, he would have answered this man who pleaded in so original and heroic a manner, in the affirmative. Some months later the superiors of the young Jesuit, who knew better the worth of this soul, considered they could authorize this offering; God, they thought, would accept it. Father Auffroy was taken prisoner in the neighbourhood of Rethel, where he was helping the parish priest, and lost his life, although no one knew how or why.

There are many other names that could be cited, even if we limit ourselves to our own era: Father Lintelo, Father Huvelin who assisted the conversion of Father Charles de Foucauld, the Abbé Chaumont, Xavierine de Maistre, Julie Adèle de Gerin-Richard, Sister Marie St Anselm of the Congregation of our Lady of Africa, Reverend Mother Couderc, foundress of the Cenacle, Sister Marie-Aimée of Jesus. This is only the beginning of the long list.

Sister Marie-Aimée, to refer to the last name, was a Carmelite; after she had in her generosity imitated St Teresa in the vow of perfection, which will be referred to later, she aspired to " an act that would bring her into touch with the martyrs, and would afford her the means of giving to Jesus

Christ, if not the testimony of her blood, at any rate the largest portion of suffering that he would lay upon her."

She was given permission to ask for suffering, yet there was no one more reserved in this matter than her director, Father Gamard. "She desired permission to offer herself as victim to the incarnate Word in reparation for the insults he had received through the book written by the impious man, Renan, who denied his divinity." Her director gave his approval, but advised her to follow up her act of consecration with an act of complete abandonment. She wrote: "The victim abandons itself, it does not say to the one who sacrifices, Do this, do that. No; he can do away with it on the spot, he can cut it in pieces, or leave it to languish. And it is in this last manner that the divine Majesty can dispose of me, nor is it the least painful."

This insistence made by prudent directors can be readily understood. If we can say that the offering to be a victim for Christ's sake is the most fundamentally generous act, is not the vow of self-abandonment the most profoundly humble action? And who can say which of these two virtues procures the greater glory to almighty God?

III

We can offer ourselves, as has just been seen, *to be used* as divine Love wishes to use us, others prefer *to use themselves* as fully as possible out of love.

In the first case we are offering ourselves for everything which the divine Will may see fit to send us; in the second, it is a case of the most generous exercise of our own wills. There we are promising to accept, from a motive of love, all the occasions of crucifying ourselves that may offer; here we are crucifying ourselves as courageously as possible to our duty.

The desire is less to be ready at all times for every sacrifice which we have had no hand in bringing to pass, than on

every occasion to give up our own fancies, so that in this way the smallest details are obscure but efficacious opportunities for self-sacrifice.

" It is to condemn ourselves to death once," said Père Ginhac, " and then to carry it into execution every day."

The soul, to aid her fragility, may choose to give to her offering either the sanction of a formal promise, or of a vow; undertaking, for example, to be faithful to the rule if she is a member of a religious congregation, or to fulfil the obligations to certain details in her daily duties; or the vow of religious perfection which is the most pleasing to God.

To attempt to decide whether the vow of abandonment or to be a victim is the most meritorious—for there are people who are always wishing that the precise degree of perfection should be measured in these matters—is quite useless and illusory, as has just been decided. Neither is better than the other, nor is either less good; they are different one from the other. Perhaps the vow of abandonment and of offering ourselves as victim more closely concerns our sensitive being, while the promise of absolute fidelity touches the inner depths of our will power. In order to establish whichever of the two is preferable to choose, in the first place all the practical possibilities and personal tastes, enlightened by grace from on high, should be consulted. Is it not a wonder to see, from time to time, certain young people anxious to give up their *all* in the guise of a promise of absolute fidelity ?

The Annals of the Visitation at Paray treasure the name of Sister Marie de la Faye des Chaines, who at seventeen years of age, wishing doubtless to realize the full meaning of her family name, bound herself to our Lord by the vow of perfection.

One of the novices of Saint Margaret Mary, Sister Françoise Rosalie, whose testimony was of great value in the biographical details of the saint, made the same vow at twenty-four years: " To be extraordinary under ordinary

circumstances," she used to say. She died when she had passed her fiftieth year, a splendid record of faithful endeavour.

As a general rule promises of this description are not for beginners: they predispose the steady practices of a generous spirit, and should be supported by well-grounded virtues, and in most cases the individual should be of mature years.

It is easily understood that Father Colombière, during his thirty days' retreat in his third year, was fitted to make the vow of perfection, or St Teresa, or in our own day Father Sengler.

From an early date the reformer of Carmel was preparing herself for these vows. She says: " I cannot recollect that since our Lord gave me the habit of the discalced Carmelite, nor even in the years before, he has ever refused out of his pure mercy to lead me towards that which I thought the most pleasing." These charming yet humble words leave all the merit of the initiative to God.

We can gain some notion of the severe manner in which Father Sengler treated himself by reading these notes of his long retreat:

25th day.—" A vain thought has given me vague fears for my constancy in the future. When I came back to my room towards a quarter past two, I went up to the window to shut it, and while I was doing so the thought came to me to listen for an instant and see whether the battle was still going on. (It was the month of December, 1870.) I waited for about two seconds, until I heard the first sound of the cannon: then I took my breviary without thinking further about it. Later on the thought came to me that I had been careless."

See the consequences of following the perfect life in our daily life: the Church may well say that it is a difficult vow; it requires a courage that is ready for every trial, and to be undertaken with full knowledge of what it entails.

One of the most expressive forms of the vow of perfection is that formulated by St Margaret Mary on October 31, 1686. It has nineteen clauses, of which these are the most important:

" 1. O my only Love, I will endeavour to keep subject and submissive to thee all that is mine, by doing that which I believe to be the most perfect and most fitting to glorify thy Sacred Heart, to whom I promise to spare nothing that is in my power, and not to refuse to do or suffer anything that will make thee to be known, loved, honoured and glorified.

" 2. I will never be negligent, nor omit any of the exercises and observances included in my Rule, unless from charity or real necessity, in obedience to which I submit all my promises."

This vow of St Margaret Mary foresees every detail; further on we read:

" 11. I will look upon those who cause me pain or speak ill of me as my best friends, and will endeavour to render to them all good and every possible service.

" 12. I will be careful never to speak of myself, or if I am obliged to do so, quite shortly, and never to praise or justify myself.

" 13. I will be constantly attentive to conform and submit my will to that of my Sovereign Lord in all things.

" 14. I will never voluntarily let my mind dwell not only on any bad thought, but on those that are useless, and I will regard myself as a beggar in the house of God, who ought to put up with everything, to whom everything is done and given out of charity. I will consider that I have always too much."

It is impossible not to be impressed by the almost heroic spirit of generosity underlying these resolutions.

But even more important than her courage is her wisdom. After having written:

" 4. I desire to suffer in silence without complaining whatever treatment I may receive:

" 5. Not to seek to escape any form of suffering, whether it be of body or spirit, humiliation, scorn or contradiction," the saint, not in order to correct or reduce what she has said, but to afford to her generosity the merit of obedience, adds:

" 7. I will not obtain for myself any consolations save those which strict necessity makes it impossible for me to avoid; in that case I will ask for them in all simplicity from the Constitutions of my order, so as to set myself free from the continual fear which haunts me, that I am giving way overmuch to my body and pampering this cruel enemy."

This mixture of courage and prudence, this enthusiasm that desires to be controlled, and impetuosity that yet acknowledges the claims of obedience, are signs by which we are able to distinguish true virtue and the evident presence of the Holy Spirit. Another sign is the care to avoid singularity, and it is useful in cases where generosity takes a somewhat unusual form which would be dangerous if humility were absent. We, therefore, see St Margaret Mary terminating her vow of perfection with these words:

" 19. I will be on my guard to allow my nature only that which I am unable to deny it for fear of being conspicuous which I wish to avoid above everything."

These words are very illuminating: they are inspired from on high and reveal generosity, simplicity, humility; great qualities all of them, but are they sufficient?

No; these ways are not for everyone. Certain persons who are resolved to make the gift of their whole selves, ought to restrain themselves, and should be absolutely forbidden, from stipulations of this nature. They are those who, owing to temperament, by divine permission or some other cause, are inclined to be agitated, to nervous introspection, and aimless restlessness and scruples.

" One day," says Father Chaumont, " I was making my preparation for Holy Communion, and I asked our Lady to inspire me to do that which was most pleasing to her dearly

beloved Son. 'Make a vow to search always and in all things for God's greater glory.' 'I will gladly do this, Holy Virgin, provided that thou wilt be my surety and help me to keep this promise. . . .'

"I told all this to our Father General . . . and he asked me whether I was not rather scrupulous. I answered him no: then he said, 'God be praised, you can make this vow.'"[1] How judicious is this question of the General! the condition he lays down is so expressive.

Without becoming scrupulous it is quite possible not to be sufficiently clear-sighted, even-tempered, or well balanced; the consciences that are fully endowed in these respects are not numerous. We are not always as reliable in our minds as in our hearts, and in order to lead the more perfect life both are needed. The folly of the Cross requires to be founded on sound common sense. Only natures that are, humanly speaking, well balanced, can safely take up these divine exaggerations. We require, then, a perfectly even mind.

We should be prepared, even so, for possible occasions of disturbance and trouble, for the Devil will quickly use them to our own great detriment. Above all, there must be expansion, an open heart, the holy liberty of God's children; we may bind, but never strangle ourselves.

Hence the importance of specifying very clearly the meaning of these obligations. St Margaret Mary, by way of an introduction, remarks very wisely, this vow "was permitted me by my superiors under certain conditions: whenever it caused me any vexation, or scruple as to any of the clauses, they absolved me from it and my promise fell to the ground."

The words of the author of *Consummata* are inspired by the same serenity of mind, and based on a judicious care.

"I promise by vow to do what I believe to be most perfect, and that:

[1] *Vie du P. Chaumont*, by Martin, p. 38.

" 1. Only on occasions of some importance, so as not to lose the spirit of love and confidence by worrying over trifles;

" 2. On occasions only where I can see *clearly* before me;

" 3. On occasions only when I have time to *reflect* and to let my *will* come into action, so that mistakes due to frailty shall not disturb me." These are considerations that deserve to be mentioned.

Many people in their humility are alarmed by the expression *vow of perfection*, or *the perfect vow*, and look for another formula.

Father *Sengler*, after having written with delightful candour that " I want to make the vow *merely* to do in all things that which is the most perfect," adds: " I said to myself that it would be better to replace the words ' most perfect ' by ' that which is most pleasing to God after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And I chose out three motives for this reasoning: ' It is less abstract, for it puts the example to be followed beside the promise, while the earlier expression is too redolent of self-love.' "

The Carmelite nun, Sister Marie-Aimée, argued in the same manner; she was given permission to make—before the vow of offering herself as victim which has already been spoken of—the promise of a perfect life. She wrote: " Instead of saying, ' I make the vow of doing that which I believe to be most perfect,' the formula of St Teresa, I prefer this method: ' I make the vow of doing that which is most agreeable to our Lord.' "

As in the case of Father Chaumont, and Father Auffroy, the superiors of St Margaret Mary showed little enthusiasm at her first overtures; her director, Father Gamard, resisted for a long time. " During all the years of my ministry," he wrote, " I have never permitted anyone to take this vow." And in point of fact, this is a prudent counsel; but like others, Father Gamard ended by authorizing it. He insisted chiefly on the need of wisdom, and declared that he preferred

to cause some trouble (which he considered would be relatively small) by forbidding it, than to run the danger of excess. Others who are more audacious, or less conversant with human frailty, are prepared to grant large permissions. True wisdom lies between these two courses.

The best method is to take into consideration the demands of God upon the soul, and the possibility of her learning how to perform the ordinary actions of every day in a supernatural or extraordinary manner.

CONCLUSION

MAYBE we shall understand better after reading these pages and the preceding volume, *In Christ Jesus*, the incomparable grandeur and splendour of the Christian.

By his union with Christ he is called upon to live in Christ.

United in Christ to all his brethren, he is called to labour in Christ for the good of his brothers.

It is only this second point that has formed the matter for this volume. The practical utility of these pages is evident at a time like this, when on all sides expedients are being brought forward to ensure peace, goodwill, and solidarity—expedients that fall to pieces because of their nature they are incomplete, seeing that they are founded on chance, and have no guarantee of permanency or depth. They proclaim the fact that in Christ and Christ alone can be found the motive for fraternal relations between men.

There is no solution outside Christ. In him all the problems of fraternal charity are solved in a manner not merely humanly adequate, but superabundant because it is divine.

Let us labour, then, to "restore all things in Christ."

We will begin with *ourselves;* let each of us be more Christian, more Christ-like; and in order that the world may become good, let each of us become better; that the world may be Christian let us become *better Christians*, in the sense that we are:

More fully endowed with the Catholic spirit,

More charitable,

More attentive to the incalculable effect of our actions and omissions.

Let us become more apostolic, in our exterior acts of zeal, and

In our prayers, and

By our resigned and, if possible, radiant acceptance of these crosses which are the ransom of souls.

Let us fashion ourselves into a Christian community, more profound because more alert, and because it is more alert more brilliant, and more brilliant because more worthy of the adorable Master whom we serve, whom we desire in this place once again to name with all the enthusiasm of our being, our well-beloved Saviour Jesus Christ.

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